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Title: The relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Ewart Gladstone,
1835-1873, with special reference to contemporary religious issues

Date: December 2010

Originally published as: University of Liverpool MPhil dissertation

Example citation: Whitehouse, G. (2010). *The relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Ewart Gladstone, 1835-1873, with special reference to contemporary religious issues*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Submitted version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/214630>

The Relationship between Samuel Wilberforce
and William Ewart Gladstone, 1835-73,
with Special Reference to Contemporary Religious Issues

‘Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Master of
Philosophy by Graham Whitehouse’

2010

Graham Whitehouse

The Relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Ewart Gladstone, 1835-73, with Special Reference to Contemporary Religious Issues

This thesis examines the private and public relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Ewart Gladstone, who became great friends between 1835 and 1873. Wilberforce (1805-1873), who became Bishop of Oxford in 1845, was an outstanding preacher and diocesan, an effective speaker in parliament, and the best known Anglican clergyman of his time. Gladstone (1809-1898), who became Liberal prime minister on four occasions, was the most fervently religious prime minister of the Victorian period.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One examines the nature and development of the private friendship between Wilberforce and Gladstone. Chapter One describes their early lives and the start of their friendship in the mid-1830s. The two men had much in common; they both came from devoutly Evangelical backgrounds, yet both became High Churchmen; both their fathers were Tory Members of Parliament, and both went to Oxford University. Chapter Two examines the consolidation of their friendship from the 1840s until Wilberforce's death in 1873. It shows their mutual respect and admiration, and enjoyment of one another's company. Their friendship reflected sympathetic and empathic responses to various family crises, including the defection of some of Wilberforce's relatives to Roman Catholicism, and the deaths of close friends and relatives. Wilberforce's ambitions for promotion were thwarted, but Gladstone was able to appoint him to the venerable bishopric of Winchester in 1869. Gladstone was clearly distraught by Wilberforce's sudden death in 1873 and fulsomely eulogised his friend.

Part Two examines the public relationship between Wilberforce and Gladstone, with particular reference to contemporary religious issues in which they shared a mutual interest. Chapter Three examines the response of Wilberforce and Gladstone to problems faced by the Church of England during the mid-Victorian period, including the divisions between Evangelicals and High Churchmen, Tractarianism, Ritualism, the Broad Church and various other doctrinal disputes. On these and other issues the two friends frequently acted in tandem. Wilberforce and Gladstone both argued with the protagonists of Darwinism in the debate on Evolutionary Theory, which challenged Christian belief. Chapter Four examines the views of Gladstone and Wilberforce on the difficult relationship between Church and State during the mid-Victorian period, and explores, by reference to the Hampden controversy, the Gorham Judgement, the re-establishment of Convocation and Papal Aggression, the extent to which they were mutually supportive. Finally, Chapter Five considers the parliamentary roles of Wilberforce and Gladstone regarding ecclesiastical legislation, where they frequently co-operated in the promotion of, and support for measures including the development of an independent Colonial Church and regulation of the Anglican clergy. Whilst Gladstone's aim to disestablish the Church of Ireland was initially opposed by Wilberforce, he came to accept it as a decision of the electorate and was instrumental in persuading the English and Irish bishops not to oppose the legislation promoting disestablishment in 1869. The parliamentary co-operation between Wilberforce and Gladstone also extended to some social legislation, including the question of divorce and the extension of elementary educational provision in 1870.

In summary, this original thesis offers the first detailed examination of the relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone – a relationship hitherto largely ignored by historians – and argues that theirs was a true and enduring friendship which equated with Aristotle's criteria for *philia*, despite differences in their personalities and occasional differences of opinion, and which also extended to mutual co-operation and support in their public lives.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, my thanks go to my supervisor, Emeritus Professor Roger Swift. I was delighted that Roger was not deterred from supervising this very mature student, whose last encounter with formal teaching of History was half a century ago. His enthusiasm, stimulation and encouragement have been constant features of our relationship. Roger has taught me a great deal, consistently steering me in the right directions and guiding my organization of data.

Professor Denis Paz gave me helpful advice and kindly allowed me to quote from his paper read at the Gladstone Bicentenary Conference held at the University of Chester in 2009.

My lifelong interest in History originated at school, where I had the benefit of a gifted and eloquent teacher in the late Harry Mees. The thrust of History, as generally taught in schools at that time, was orientated to events. Somewhat against the grain, Harry taught us about the personalities of those who shaped events. I have tried to bring this influence to bear in the thesis.

My wife, Jackie, has my special gratitude for her constant support, and so much more. Thanks are due to my daughter, Victoria, for applying her considerable computing skills to the benefit of this thesis. My son in law, Ben Hewitson, is a graduate in History and I am grateful for his personal interest and the discussions we have had along the way concerning Victorian History. I am grateful to my son and daughter in law, Richard and Alexi, for providing me with bed and board during my visits to the British Library. Richard gave me invaluable advice concerning the formatting of the thesis.

I am also grateful to the staff of the libraries at St Deiniol's, Hawarden, at Chester and Liverpool Universities, and at the British Library for their help and advice.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS	Gladstone Correspondence held at the British Library
BL	Bodleian Library, Oxford
GD	Gladstone Diaries
Hansard	HC House of Commons
	HL House of Lords
	Deb Debate
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

INTRODUCTION

1 Context

This thesis examines the relationship between Samuel Wilberforce, probably the best known and most politically-orientated Anglican cleric of the mid-Victorian age, and William Ewart Gladstone, the pre-eminent Victorian statesman and the most religious politician of his times. The private and public relationship between these two illustrious Victorians commenced in 1834 and developed into a close friendship which endured until Wilberforce's death in 1873. This friendship has hitherto been largely ignored by historians.

Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873), the third son of William Wilberforce, the reformer and leader of the anti-slavery movement, was ordained in 1828. After a rapid rise through the ranks of the Anglican Church he was appointed Bishop of Oxford in 1845. Wilberforce's metier was organisation and management. He had charisma, extensive social connections and was a fine preacher. As a result of Wilberforce's energetic pastoral work the diocese of Oxford benefited from fund raising, church building, increased numbers of clergy, frequent confirmations and having its own theological college. Wilberforce was in great demand nationally as a preacher, often spoke in the House of Lords, was a prolific correspondent and sat on many committees. Charles Greville, meeting the then Archdeacon Wilberforce in 1845, described him as 'a very quick, lively agreeable man who is in favour at Court' and 'A remarkable man full of cleverness and vivacity, very unlike a Churchman in Society and Parliament'.¹

¹ Pearce, E., ed. *The Diaries of Charles Greville* (London, 2005), pp.25 & 230.

Although a man of integrity, his affable, smooth and sometimes unctuous manner resulted in the sobriquet of ‘Soapy Sam’.² One admirer explained that this was because he was ‘supposed to be fulsomely gracious to everyone with whom he was in contact, without real sincerity at the back, when in reality his gentleness and courtesy to all was in contrast to the cold *mien* of many of his Episcopal colleagues’.³ Wilberforce’s impetuous nature and sometimes ill-considered remarks occasionally resulted in him being distrusted and unpopular. Over time he lost his reputation for wheeling and dealing, becoming widely acclaimed as the ‘great Episcopalian’. Cobden said of Wilberforce: ‘...if he had not been a Priest he must have been a Prime Minister.’ Lord Chelmsford said of him: ‘...had he been one of us [a lawyer] he must certainly have been Lord Chancellor’.⁴ He had unfulfilled ambitions of becoming an archbishop, becoming Bishop of Winchester in 1869.

William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) entered parliament as a Tory in 1832 and was President of the Board of Trade in Peel’s second ministry (1841-46). Gladstone gradually moved towards Liberalism and was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Aberdeen’s ministry (1852-55) and in Palmerston’s two cabinets (1855-58, 1859-65). He subsequently became Liberal prime minister four times (1868-74, 1880-85, 1886, 1892-94). He steadfastly and consistently applied Christian moral principles to his political thinking and decision making. Gladstone followed the philosophy of Bishop Butler that ‘probability is the very guide of life’.⁵ Applied to politics, this meant that Gladstone only made a policy decision when he had weighed up the probabilities after reviewing all the available information. Having made a decision he was

² Newsome, D., ‘How Soapy was Sam? A Study of Samuel Wilberforce,’ *History Today*, Vol.13 (1963), pp.624-32.

³ Baring-Gould, S., *The Church Revival* (London, 1914), p.174.

⁴ Ashwell, A.R. & Wilberforce, R.G., *Life of Bishop Wilberforce* (3 vols., London, 1880), Vol.1, p.283.

⁵ Butler, J., *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), p.38 in 1863 (Cincinnati) edition.

unwavering in his pursuit of the policy. Lord Rosebery, in a eulogy to Gladstone, stated that 'The faith of Mr Gladstone, obvious to all who knew him, pervaded every act and every part of his life'.⁶

2 Aims and Rationale

The first correspondence between Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone was a letter from Wilberforce in 1834, requesting Gladstone's support in Parliament against Lord John Russell's marriage bills. This letter alludes to a slight acquaintance between them.⁷ Yet the firm and enduring friendship that subsequently developed between these two eminent Victorians – the subject of this particular thesis – has hitherto evaded historical scrutiny. While Gladstone's relationships with many of his contemporaries – including Queen Victoria,⁸ Russell,⁹ Palmerston,¹⁰ Granville,¹¹ Disraeli,¹² Newman,¹³ Manning,¹⁴ Acton,¹⁵ Grote,¹⁶ Ruskin¹⁷ and Tennyson¹⁸ – have been the subjects of scholarly study, his friendship with Wilberforce has been largely ignored by Gladstone's biographers, with the possible exception of John Morley in

⁶ Bebbington, D. W., *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge, 1993), p.224.

⁷ British Library, Correspondence between W.E.Gladstone and Samuel Wilberforce Add. MS 44343, 8 May 1834.

⁸ Guedalla, P., *The Queen and Mr Gladstone* (2 vols., London, 1933).

⁹ Prest, J., 'Gladstone and Russell', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1966), 5th series, Vol.16, pp 43-63.

¹⁰ Steele, E.D., 'Gladstone and Palmerston, 1855-1865' in *Gladstone, Politics and Religion*, ed. P.J. Jagger (London, 1985), pp.117-47.

¹¹ Ramm A., *Political Correspondence of Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville* (4 vols, London, 1952-62), reprinted as *The Gladstone-Granville Correspondence* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1999).

¹² Abbott, B.H., *Gladstone and Disraeli* (London, 1972).

¹³ Bastable, J.D., *Newman and Gladstone Centennial Essays* (Dublin, 1978).

¹⁴ McClelland, V.A., 'Gladstone and Manning: A Question of Authority' in *Gladstone, Politics and Religion*, ed. P.J. Jagger (London, 1985), pp.148-170.

¹⁵ Chadwick, O., *Acton and Gladstone* (London, 1976).

¹⁶ Bebbington, D.W., 'Gladstone and Grote', in *Gladstone*, ed. P.J. Jagger (London, 1998), pp. 157-76.

¹⁷ Wheeler, M., 'Gladstone and Ruskin,' in *Gladstone*, ed. P.J. Jagger (London, 1998), pp. 177-96.

¹⁸ Joseph, G., 'The Homeric Competitions of Tennyson and Gladstone', *Browning Institute Studies*, Vol.10 (1982), pp.105-15.

his classic study of 1903¹⁹ and Roy Jenkins.²⁰ An outstanding exception is G.W.E. Russell, who uses many extracts from Wilberforce's diary and from the correspondence between the two men as a continuous thread through his biography of Gladstone, which was published during his lifetime. Russell describes Samuel Wilberforce as Gladstone's 'lifelong friend, counsellor and supporter' with a 'keen appreciation of Gladstone's character and gifts, his shrewd perception of his friend's motives and impulses, and of the diverse influences which swayed him'.²¹ By contrast, Wilberforce is mentioned only four times by Philip Magnus²² and Travis Crosby,²³ five times by Richard Shannon,²⁴ six times by Colin Matthew²⁵ and once by David Bebbington.²⁶ Moreover, important recent studies of Gladstone by Biagini²⁷ and Partridge²⁸ contain no references to Samuel Wilberforce. Similarly, biographies of Wilberforce (admittedly sparse in comparison with those of Gladstone who has been well served by biographers²⁹) largely ignore the friendship with Gladstone. The exception is the three-volume biography by A.R. Ashwell and Reginald Wilberforce (Samuel's son),³⁰ to whom Gladstone donated his correspondence with Samuel Wilberforce. Indeed, Standish Meacham, the most recent biographer of Samuel Wilberforce, has denied that a friendship existed.³¹ Arthur Burns has contributed a comprehensive biographical sketch of Samuel Wilberforce in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* which included six mentions of Gladstone, with recognition of

¹⁹ Morley, J., *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (3 vols, London, 1903).

²⁰ Jenkins, R., *Gladstone* (London, 1995).

²¹ Russell, G.W.E., *William Ewart Gladstone* (London, 1891), p.227.

²² Magnus, P., *Gladstone: A Biography* (London, 1954).

²³ Crosby, T.L., *The Two Mr Gladstones: A Study in Psychology and History* (Newhaven, Connecticut, 1997).

²⁴ Shannon, R.T., *Gladstone* (2vols, London, 1982 and 1999).

²⁵ Matthew, H.C.G., *Gladstone* (Oxford, 1998).

²⁶ Bebbington (1993).

²⁷ Biagini, E.F., *Gladstone* (London, 2000).

²⁸ Partridge, M., *Gladstone* (London, 2003).

²⁹ Swift, R., 'William Ewart Gladstone: A Selected Bibliography', in D.Bebbington and R.Swift, eds. *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool, 2000), pp.260-75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Meacham, S., *Lord Bishop: The Life of Samuel Wilberforce* (Harvard, 1970), p.273.

an association developing between them in the early 1840s, and a reference to their correspondence housed in the British Library.³²

In some respects, the failure of historians to examine the relationship between the two men is surprising, for the friendship between Gladstone and Wilberforce was rooted in part by the fact that they had much in common. Both were raised in the Evangelical tradition, later becoming aligned with the High Church. However, both men retained some of the Evangelical tenets such as the importance of Sin and Atonement. This may have influenced Gladstone in 1848 to set up the Church Penitentiary Association for the Reclamation of Fallen Women, in collaboration with Wilberforce and Bishop Blomfield of London, although there is no evidence that Wilberforce joined Gladstone in his work on the streets of London.³³ Wilberforce and Gladstone actively supported the Clewer House of Mercy in Windsor, which gave shelter to girls and women caught up in poverty and prostitution from the early 1850s.³⁴ Gladstone, as a young man, had aspirations to become a clergyman, but was dissuaded by his father. Both were sons of Members of Parliament. They were almost contemporaries at Oxford, Wilberforce going up in 1823 and Gladstone in 1828. Both were active members of the Debating Society, the precursor of the Oxford Union. Both also had close relatives and friends who converted to Roman Catholicism. At one time both Wilberforce and Gladstone were falsely suspected of having Romish sympathies. Both were formidable orators, given to making long speeches and sermons. However, their styles were different. Bishop Handley Moule, hearing them speak at the same meeting described them as ‘A wonderful pair and a striking contrast. Gladstone erect and dignified, was restrained and elevated in style and

³² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter *ODNB*], Burns, A., ‘Wilberforce, Samuel (1805-1873)’ (2007), pp.15.

³³ Jenkins, p.76.

³⁴ Magnus, p.105.

manner, while giving a grand impression of force in reserve. Wilberforce was life and fire personified'.³⁵ Another observer commented that Wilberforce's 'presence was commanding and he had a fine, sonorous [voice]'.³⁶

Significantly, Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone in 1838: 'Few young men have the weight you have in the House of Commons and are gaining rapidly through the country' and portentously 'There is no height to which you may not fairly rise in this country...you may at a future date wield the whole government of this land'.³⁷

Denis Paz has pointed out that Aristotle argued that friendship stemmed from three elements: mutual utility, pleasure in one another's company and respect for one another's virtues. *Philia* arises from utility and pleasure, but may be short lived, fading away as the common benefit fades. The passage of time is required for *philia* to develop, during which friends work together, share difficulties and success, and mature.³⁸ To what extent Aristotle's parameters of friendship apply to the friendship between Wilberforce and Gladstone should emerge as this thesis evolves.

Given the lack of scholarly study of the subject, the precise relationship between Gladstone and Wilberforce remains opaque and poses several questions which this thesis seeks to answer: First, how and why did their friendship develop? What was the nature of this friendship? And how was their friendship consolidated as their careers developed? These questions are explored in Part One. Second, it is important to note that in the public sphere both Wilberforce and Gladstone, the one who imbued his office as leader of the government with a Christian ethic and the other being the churchman with the highest profile at the time, discussed and corresponded for almost

³⁵ Harford, J.B. & MacDonald, F.C., *Handley Carr Glyn Moule – Bishop of Durham, a Biography* (London, 1922), p.124.

³⁶ Baring-Gould, S., p.174.

³⁷ Add. MS 44343, 20 April 1838.

³⁸ Paz, D., 'Gladstone as Friend', unpublished paper presented at the Gladstone Bicentenary International Conference, University of Chester, July 2009. I am grateful to Professor Paz for allowing me access to this essay.

forty years on all the important ecclesiastical issues during a period when the Church of England faced many complex challenges. Thus Part Two addresses three specific questions: First, how did they respond to conflicts and divisions within the Church of England during the early Victorian Age? Secondly, what were their views on the relationship between Church and State? Thirdly, how far and in what ways did their public and parliamentary roles influence and contribute to ecclesiastical and moral legislation?

In this context, this original research seeks to break new ground in the study of these two eminent Victorians by examining the nature and development of their private and public relationship, the influence they had on one another, and the significance of this in relation to the contemporary religious and ecclesiastical issues with which they were confronted.

3 Sources

The research exploits a rich variety of accessible primary source materials located in London, Oxford and Hawarden. There is extensive archival material available, from the diaries and correspondence of Gladstone and Wilberforce, covering the years from 1834 until Wilberforce's death in 1873. This not only covers political and ecclesiastical matters but also gives an insight into their opinion of each other and some of their contemporaries. There is also some correspondence concerning family and personal matters, indicating that a true friendship existed between them. Their speeches in Parliament, recorded in *Hansard*, will complement the documentation. It should be noted that in the case of Wilberforce these have received little evaluation despite his oratorical skill and frequent contributions to parliamentary debates. These

primary sources, described more fully below, will provide the essential evidential base upon which the study is constructed.

For Wilberforce, the most important primary sources are: [1] Wilberforce's Diaries, located in the Bodleian Library as *The Diaries of Samuel Wilberforce, 1853-73*; [2] the letter books, edited by R.K.Pugh and J.F.A. Mason as *The Letter Books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68* (Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1970);³⁹ [3] correspondence held in the British Library, including Add. MSS 44343-44345, 44467, 44616 *Correspondence between Wilberforce and Gladstone 1834-1873*, which appears to be the definitive collection; [4] A.R.Ashwell and R.G.Wilberforce's *Life of Bishop Wilberforce* (London, 1880). This three-volume work includes extensive correspondence as well as some of Wilberforce's diary entries; R.G. Wilberforce also wrote a single volume condensed version of the *Life of Bishop Wilberforce* which includes some additional material (London, 1889). [5] *The Gladstone Diaries*, 14 vols. (Oxford, 1968-94), edited by M.R.D.Foot and H.C.G.Matthew, contains a number of references to Wilberforce. The diocese books describing Wilberforce's record of administration within the Oxford diocese have recently been published.⁴⁰

For Gladstone, the most important primary sources are: [1] *The Gladstone Diaries*, 14 vols. (Oxford, 1968-94), ed. Foot, M.R.D. [vols. 1 & 2]; ed. Foot, M.R.D. and Matthew, H.C.G. [vols.3&4]; ed. Matthew, H.C.G. [vols. 5-14]; [2] the 750 volumes of the Gladstone papers in the British Library, which form the largest collection of papers of a British prime minister held there;⁴¹ [3] Gladstone's Correspondence, the most comprehensive published collection of which is drawn from the Gladstone Collection at the British Library and St Deiniol's Library.⁴² The parliamentary speeches of both Gladstone in

³⁹ Pugh, R.K. & Mason, J.F.A., eds. *The Letter-books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68* (Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Record Societies, 1970).

⁴⁰ Pugh, R. & Pugh, M., eds. *The Diocese Books of Samuel Wilberforce: Bishop of Oxford 1845-1869* (Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Record Societies, 2008).

⁴¹ These are described in A.T.Bassett's *The Gladstone Papers* (London, 1930) and catalogued in *British Museum Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts: The Gladstone Papers* (London, 1953).

⁴² This is now available in microfilm, edited by H.C.G.Matthew as *The Papers of William Ewart Gladstone* (Papers of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain Series Eight, Primary Source Media, Reading, 1998).

the House of Commons and Wilberforce in the House of Lords are recorded in *Hansard*, a complete set of which located in Liverpool University Library.

4. Methodology

The thesis falls into two parts which are not mutually exclusive but are interrelated and complementary. A thematic approach has been adopted within each chapter, in which I have largely exploited a chronological framework as far as possible. The background and then the development of the friendship is a definable entity, covered in Part One. The various contemporary religious and ecclesiastical issues on which both Wilberforce and Gladstone held opinions, and indeed added their stamp, fall into well-defined categories which are best explored in separate chapters within Part Two.

Part One examines the nature and development of the private friendship between Wilberforce and Gladstone from 1834 until 1873. Chapter One traces the making of the friendship between them up to 1840, with particular reference to their family, cultural and social backgrounds, early upbringings, education, personalities and attitudes. Emphasis is made on the role of religion in the moulding of their early lives.

Chapter Two considers the consolidation of the friendship, covering the period from the 1840s, when the careers of Wilberforce and Gladstone were in the ascendancy, until Wilberforce's death in 1873. The reactions of each to the vicissitudes and tribulations which occurred during the career of the other are explored. Particular consideration is given to the conversion of family and friends to Roman Catholicism and, especially in the 1850s, to the death of friends. Brief coverage is given to the relationship between Wilberforce and Disraeli, who was Gladstone's nemesis.

Part Two examines the public relationship between Wilberforce and Gladstone with particular reference to the contemporary religious issues in which they were both involved. Chapter Three examines the views and responses of Wilberforce and Gladstone to a number of issues arising from conflicts and divisions within the Established Church. The divisions include Evangelicalism, the High Church, Tractarianism, Ritualism and the Broad Church.

Other disputes discussed are the conflict between F.D. Maurice and King's College London, the Colenso case, the altercation between Wilberforce and Pusey, and the challenge which evolutionary theory posed to Christian belief.

Chapter Four explores the attitude of Wilberforce and Gladstone towards the Established Church and the complex relationship between Church and State, with particular reference to Gladstone's books on his perceptions of the role of the State and the nature of the Established Church; State interference and judgements on doctrinal issues, including the Hampden controversy, the Gorham judgement and the *Denison v Ditcher* case; the religious census of 1851 and its implications; the problem of the Dissenters; the rise of Roman Catholicism and Papal Aggression; and Convocation.

Chapter Five examines the contribution and co-operation between Wilberforce and Gladstone in their parliamentary roles concerning the promotion of ecclesiastical legislation during the mid-Victorian years, with particular reference to the regulation of the Anglican clergy and public worship, colonial Church government and the Church of Ireland. This chapter also examines their responses in parliament to two contemporary issues in which the Church of England had an intrinsic interest, namely elementary educational provision and the question of divorce.

PART ONE

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE AND WILLIAM EWART

GLADSTONE: A PRIVATE FRIENDSHIP

CHAPTER ONE

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE AND WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE: THE MAKING OF A FRIENDSHIP

This chapter will focus upon the family backgrounds and early upbringings of Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone. It will then examine the origins of the acquaintance between them and the development of the friendship which lasted until Samuel Wilberforce's death in 1873.

1.1 Family Backgrounds

William Wilberforce (1759-1833), Samuel's father, was born in Hull into a prosperous family of merchants in the Baltic Trade. Having inherited considerable wealth William became Member of Parliament for Hull in 1780, standing as an independent Tory, at the age of twenty one. In 1785 William underwent a religious conversion while on holiday in Europe with an ardent Methodist travelling companion. He then fell under the influence of Evangelicals, including the reformer Hannah More⁴³ who was Evangelicalism's greatest publicist. William's newfound Christian faith led him to an interest in social reform. William Wilberforce led the attack in Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade, introducing a number of antislavery motions. The slave trade was finally abolished by Act of Parliament in 1807. The abolitionist movement remained active, campaigning against the retention of slavery. William was one of the founders of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1827. In 1833, just before William died, the Slavery Abolition Act outlawed slavery in the

⁴³ ODNB. Skedd, S.J., 'Hannah More (1745-1833)' (2007), pp.16. Writer and philanthropist.

British colonies. William also led initiatives to halt what he saw as the moral decline of the nation. He was a founding member of the Church Missionary Society.

In 1793, William moved to Clapham. Together with a group of friends, some of whom he knew from University and some who were Members of Parliament, but all of whom were Abolitionists and in the main committed Evangelical Christians, a close community was formed in Clapham. This later became known as the Clapham Sect and was the launching pad for the campaign to abolish slavery, the fostering of missionary work and Christian education, as well as the setting of higher standards of morality in public and political life. In 1796 William married Barbara Spooner, the daughter of a Birmingham merchant banker. This was a long and happy union.⁴⁴ Their children were William (b.1798), Barbara (b.1799), Elizabeth (b.1801), Robert (b.1802), Samuel (b.1805) and Henry (b.1807). Robert, Samuel and Henry all proceeded to Oriel College, Oxford and all three became clergymen. William, having failed at the Bar, became a farmer. He also failed at this, resulting in considerable financial loss to his father.

By contrast, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Gladstones family 'had glided down from moderate lairds to small maltsters'.⁴⁵ Thomas Gladstones, William Ewart's grandfather, moved from Biggar to Leith where he set up as a corn dealer. An interesting resonance with the Wilberforce family was that Thomas was involved in shipping within the Baltic Trade, but on a much smaller scale than the Wilberforces in Hull. Thomas Gladstones had sixteen children, the eldest being John, William Ewart's father, born in 1764. John, who showed much ambition and enterprise from an early age, moved in 1787 to Liverpool where he entered partnership with two corn merchants. He dropped the 's' off the family name because 'Gladstones' sounded

⁴⁴ Meacham, p.4.

⁴⁵ Morley, Vol.1, p.16.

awkward alongside the names of his partners in the firm's title. When the partnership ended fourteen years later, John remained in business on his own account and became very wealthy. His first wife died childless. In 1800 John married Anne, the daughter of Provost Robertson of Dingwall, whose wife was an Episcopalian and Jacobite Mackenzie.

John was a Whig until he changed his political allegiance when George Canning⁴⁶ raised a new 'liberal' movement within entrenched Toryism.⁴⁷ John, by now a prominent member of the local community, invited Canning to stand as parliamentary candidate for Liverpool in 1812, bankrolling his election expenses. Canning was duly elected. John himself was a Member of Parliament from 1818 until 1827. John Gladstone owned extensive sugar and coffee plantations in Jamaica and Demarara (British Guiana). In 1823 a rebellion of negro slaves in Demarara was particularly centred on one of John's plantations and was put down with great harshness and loss of life. John became embroiled in a heated and prolonged controversy concerning the management of his plantations. He did not defend slavery, but protested against the abuse levelled by all 'the intemperate, credulous, designing or interested individuals who follow the lead of that well-meaning but mistaken man, Mr Wilberforce'.⁴⁸ In 1830 he published a pamphlet⁴⁹ in the form of a letter to Sir Robert Peel,⁵⁰ putting forward the view that negroes were happier when forced to work and their labour was essential to the welfare of the colonies. He considered that the public would do better to look into the condition of the lower classes at home

⁴⁶ ODNB. Beales, D., 'George Canning (1770-1827)' (2008), pp.17. Foreign Secretary 1807-9 & 1822-7, Prime Minister 1827, M.P. for Liverpool 1812-22.

⁴⁷ Morley, Vol.1, p.20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.23.

⁴⁹ John Gladstone, *A statement of facts connected with the present state of slavery in the British sugar and coffee colonies, and in the United States of America, together with a view of the present situation of the lower classes in the United Kingdom* (London, 1830).

⁵⁰ ODNB. Prest, J. 'Sir Robert Peel, 2nd baronet (1788-1850)' (2009), pp.18. Prime Minister 1841-6.

rather than the negroes in the colonies. John's eldest son, Thomas Gladstone, by now an MP, defended his father in Parliament. Commissioners investigating conditions in the Gladstone plantations found that the labourers appeared contented and were generally not mistreated. These reports were laid upon the table in the House of Commons in 1840. As Morley comments: 'The union of fervid evangelical religion and antagonism to abolition must in those days have been rare and, in spite of his devoted faith in his father, the youthful [William] Gladstone must have had uneasy moments'.⁵¹ The offspring of John and Anne Gladstone were of totally Scottish blood. The firstborn, Anne (1802) was an invalid, as was her mother, and died at the age of 26. Thomas never rose beyond the rank of a Tory backbencher. Robertson, born in 1805, entered the family business and became Mayor of Liverpool. John Neilson, the third son, followed a naval career and was a Conservative MP for a time. Next, in 1809, came William Ewart. Helen Jane, the last child, was born in 1814.

1.2 Early Upbringings

As Colin Matthew observed, the offspring of both the Wilberforce and Gladstone families were brought up in an atmosphere of close interest in national politics, politicians and commerce.⁵²

Samuel Wilberforce's early upbringing was influenced by the prevailing lifestyle in the Clapham Sect, which was for families to mingle in the various homes, across the open plan gardens. This changed when Samuel was aged three and the family moved from Clapham to Kensington. The move enabled William to see more of his children, which was the main motive for him resigning his Yorkshire seat in 1812. The Wilberforces had a constant flow of visitors, reflecting William's charismatic and

⁵¹ Morley, Vol.1, pp.24-5.

⁵² Matthew, p.8.

gregarious personality⁵³ (traits which were inherited by Samuel) and his dynamic pursuit of reform in many guises.

Evangelical Christianity was a dominant force in the home lives of both Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone, although they both later evolved into High Churchmen. As an Evangelical, William Wilberforce worshipped a God whose nearness was at once comforting and terrifying.⁵⁴ God would listen to him and help him bear his problems, but for his own salvation he had to obey the stern demands that Conscience laid upon him. William Wilberforce wanted his children to be gradually steeped in religion from an early age, in contrast to his own sudden conversion in his twenties. Anglican Evangelicals considered conversion to be a gradual process, even a lifelong one, while Nonconformist Evangelicals (especially Methodists) saw conversion as a sudden emotional event.⁵⁵ William Wilberforce gently and persistently urged upon his children the cultivation of a closer union with Christ,⁵⁶ although 'parents should render religion as congenial as possible'.⁵⁷ Prayer was an essential and constant conduit to God, the Wilberforce family joining together in prayer twice a day.

Few details have been preserved of Samuel Wilberforce's early years. From 1817, when he was in his twelfth year, Samuel received six hundred letters from his

⁵³ Francis Galton (1822-1911), the august researcher into hereditary traits and founder of eugenics, published in 1869 a book entitled *Hereditary Genius*. In this he evaluated the inherent qualities of prominent British families. He comments (p.123) that William Wilberforce, even at the age of 7 showed a remarkable talent for elocution and had a singularly melodious voice which has proved hereditary and 'was very quick'. Samuel is described as a prelate, orator and administrator; Galton gives Samuel an annotation which ranks him on equal terms with his father; unlike his brothers Robert and Henry who do not.

⁵⁴ Meacham, p.5.

⁵⁵ Bebbington, D.W., 'Gladstone and the Nonconformists: A Religious Affinity in Politics', in *Church, Society and Politics*, ed. D.Baker, *Studies in Church History*, Vol.12, pp.369-82.

⁵⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.10-11.

⁵⁷ Wilberforce, R.I. and Wilberforce, S., *Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London, 1839), 2nd ed., Vol.4, p.152.

father,⁵⁸ despite William's preoccupation with politics and his large family, his weakening health and failing eyesight. These letters show a great concern for Samuel's spiritual wellbeing. One letter urged Samuel to 'strive against *formality* in your private prayers', an Evangelical tenet.⁵⁹ In other letters William impels Samuel 'not to be unkind to others'⁶⁰ and 'to give way to the wish or will of your companion when there is nothing wrong in question'.⁶¹

As John Gladstone became increasingly wealthy, he moved his family from Rodney Street in central Liverpool to Seaforth House, a large mansion he had built at the mouth of the Mersey. William was six years old at the time of the move. He had already met many of the great and the good in Tory politics. One of these was George Canning who remained an inspiring figure for him.⁶² In 1866, William Gladstone told the House of Commons: 'I was bred under the shadow of the great name of Canning; every influence connected with that name governed the politics of my childhood and my youth'.⁶³ The Gladstone household also reflected the strong Evangelical emphasis on reading the Bible, personal duty, family obligation, Sin and Atonement. The Evangelical influence on William was mainly set by the two chronically invalid Annes – his mother and sister. William's mother believed that he had been 'truly converted to God' when he was ten years old.⁶⁴ This is debatable, but William was certainly a committed Christian at an early age and taught in Sunday school by the age of twelve.⁶⁵ The awareness of Sin and personal shortcomings was a persistent mantra during William Gladstone's adolescence and early manhood, as expressed in

⁵⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.10.

⁶² Brooke, J. and Sorensen, M. eds., *The Prime Minister's Papers: W. E. Gladstone. Vol.1, Autobiographical Memoranda* (London, HMSO 1971), p. 13.

⁶³ Hansard, *House of Commons Reports*, 27 April 1866.

⁶⁴ Matthew, p.6.

⁶⁵ Morley, Vol.1, p.16.

his diary.⁶⁶ Many Evangelicals kept a diary, as William Gladstone did from the age of sixteen until almost his death, in order to remind themselves of their faults and to account to God.⁶⁷ Sister Anne's early death had a profound effect on him, the anniversary henceforth being kept by him as a special day of religious observance. At the time of her death in 1829 he wrote: 'How unworthy have I been of the love, and the attention, with which the departed saint has honoured me'.⁶⁸ Aged seventeen, William observed that: 'The path of the Christian to Heaven is steeper than that of his fellows, insomuch it leads to a *higher place* - as in ascending a hill or mountain. Very applicable to Mother and A[nne]'.⁶⁹ These two women represented a quality of holiness which intensified William's own sense of inadequacy. John Gladstone, in contrast, must have represented to William the strong sense of paternalism which was often a feature of Evangelicalism. The belonging to the established and politicised Anglican Church seems appropriate for a pragmatic entrepreneur and Tory politician like John Gladstone, rather than the moralistic and fundamental faith of William Wilberforce.

There were several connections between the Wilberforces and Gladstones. William Wilberforce had been a guest in the Gladstone house in 1809. Mrs Gladstone was a fervent admirer of Wilberforce. It is an intriguing possibility that William, who was born in December of that year, was named after him. As a child, William Gladstone had been taken by his mother to see Hannah More, the close associate of William Wilberforce in his reform work, at her home in Bristol.

⁶⁶ Foot M.R.D. and Matthew H.C.G., eds., *The Gladstone Diaries: with Prime Ministerial Correspondence* [hereafter *GD*], 14 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968-96), Vol.1, p.91, 29 Dec. 1826.

⁶⁷ Matthew, pp.99-100.

⁶⁸ *GD*, Vol.1, 23 Feb.1829.

⁶⁹ *GD*, Vol.1, 8 Jan.1826.

Samuel Wilberforce's education prior to going to university was wholly private.

The reason for this was given by William Wilberforce in a letter to Samuel:

[It] is often one of the consequences of a youth's being at a great School, especially if his parents are pious, that he has one set of principles and ways of going on in all respects at school and another at home. But it is chiefly for the very purpose of providing against this double system, that pious parents do not like to send their children to Public Schools.⁷⁰

Presumably it was only in the household of a clergyman with the right religious sentiments that parents could know that such a conflict would not arise. From the age of eleven Samuel stayed with various clergymen. In 1819, he was moved to the Reverend George Hodson, who was chaplain to a friend of the Wilberforces, Lewis Way of Stanstead Park near Emsworth in Sussex. Hodson had six pupils, among who was Henry Hoare who would join with Samuel Wilberforce in reviving Convocation. Mrs Hodson was a niece of James Stephen, one of William Wilberforce's antislavery allies, who had married William's older sister. The Reverend John Sargent and Mrs Sargent, who lived close by at Lavington, were frequent visitors to Stanstead. Mrs Sargent's father was first cousin to William Wilberforce. It was at this time that Samuel became acquainted with the Sargents' daughter, Emily, who became his wife.

In 1821, when just sixteen, Samuel decided on a career in Holy Orders. This decision pleased his father, who placed zeal as the top qualification for a clergyman and warned that 'there are so many clergymen who are no better than tradesmen, whether you regard the motives from which they enter the Church or discharge its offices'.⁷¹ In 1822 Samuel became a pupil of the Reverend Mr. Spragg at Bilborough,

⁷⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.16-17.

⁷¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.14.

in preparation for Oxford. Here the gregarious Samuel enjoyed the proximity to Tunbridge Wells ‘where there is a succession of company’.⁷²

By contrast, William Gladstone went to Eton at the age of eleven. Prior to that he had attended a small school run by the vicar of the church built by John Gladstone in Seaforth. John Gladstone sent his sons to Eton presumably because he wanted them to become members of the ruling class. Eton was, after all, the *alma mater* of George Canning who he held in high regard.

William was at Eton from 1821 until 1827. The formal education was largely around Latin and Greek, with some modern languages. Boys of character, ability and initiative were likely to succeed at Eton. William was a willing and able pupil. He was elected to the small and select Eton Society whose members indulged in intellectual discussion and debate. Gladstone’s most intense and intimate friendship was with the aesthetic and Whiggish Arthur Hallam,⁷³ who died tragically young and became the subject of Tennyson’s elegy *In Memoriam*. Others within his circle were James Milnes Gaskell,⁷⁴ George Selwyn⁷⁵ and Gerald Wellesley.⁷⁶ William’s diary is revealing. In this he expressed his personal feelings as well as documenting his school work and private reading. An Evangelical *leitmotiv* is concern about his shortcomings: ‘I have wasted much of the time committed to me’.⁷⁷ On his seventeenth birthday ‘retrospect does not give me much reason to congratulate myself on great industry in any branch of improvement’.⁷⁸ One year later: ‘...I cannot perceive any great improvement (too much I fear to the contrary)...as regards my

⁷² *BD*, I C205, 16 Nov.1822.

⁷³ *ODNB*. Lang, T., ‘Arthur Henry Hallam (1811-33)’ (2007), pp.2. Poet and essayist.

⁷⁴ *ODNB*. Matthew, H.C.G., ‘James Milnes Gaskell (1810-73)’ (2004), pp.2. Politician. Government whip 1841-6.

⁷⁵ *ODNB*. Porter, A., ‘George Augustus Selwyn (1809-78)’ (2004), pp.5. Tractarian Bishop of New Zealand 1841-67, Lichfield 1868-78.

⁷⁶ *ODNB*. Reynolds, K.D., ‘Gerald Valerian Wellesley (1809-82)’ (2004), pp.3. Resident Chaplain to the Queen from 1849, Dean of Windsor 1854-82.

⁷⁷ *GD*, Vol.1, 27 Sept.1825.

⁷⁸ *GD*, Vol.1, 29 Dec.1826.

disposition and conduct – my temporal or spiritual duties’.⁷⁹ Gladstone read the Bible daily and extensively on Sundays, sometimes in Greek. A regular feature of Sundays was the reading of sermons and theological works. In 1827 he was confirmed at school ‘according to the apostolic rite preserved in the Church of England’⁸⁰, a shift onto higher ground in the Anglican Church despite his Evangelistic conscience. More than fifty years later, Gladstone reflected that ‘the actual teaching of Christianity [at Eton] was all but dead, although happily none of its forms had been surrendered’.⁸¹ On leaving school Gladstone felt ‘that the happiest period of my life is now past. If anything mortal is sweet, my Eton years...have been so!’⁸²

After Eton Gladstone had private tuition with the Reverend John Turner, Rector of Wilmslow and later Bishop of Calcutta. Gladstone joined his family in Edinburgh in the spring of 1828. Turner had urged Gladstone to make contact there with Edward Craig, an Evangelical friend of his. Craig raised with Gladstone the matter of baptismal regeneration, an issue which divided Evangelicals from other Anglicans.⁸³ According to the Book of Common Prayer, the act of Baptism results in rebirth into the Christian life. Many Evangelicals believed that people only truly become Christians after they have experienced Conversion. Gladstone subsequently sought other theological opinions on this issue, continuing to do so after he had started at Oxford. It may have been during this time prior to going to Oxford that he considered taking Holy Orders.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *GD*, Vol.1, 29 Dec.1827.

⁸⁰ *GD*, Vol.1, 1 Feb.1827.

⁸¹ Gladstone, W.E., *Gleanings of Past Years* (London, 1879), Vol.1, p.138.

⁸² *GD*, Vol.1, 2 Dec.1827.

⁸³ Baptismal regeneration was and remains a complex issue, with a range of accommodations and compromises within the Evangelical community, including Dissenters. See Cross, A.R., ‘Baptismal Regeneration: Rehabilitating a Lost Dimension of New Testament Baptism’ in *Baptist Sacramentalism 2*, ed. A.R.Cross and P.E.Thompson (Milton Keynes, 2008), pp.149-75.

⁸⁴ Bebbington (1993), p.32.

Why did William Wilberforce choose to send three of his sons to Oxford when Cambridge was not only a hotbed of Evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century but also the *alma mater* of himself and many of his closest friends? William Wilberforce looked back on his own time at Cambridge as one of idleness and dissipation.⁸⁵ His eldest son's time at Cambridge had been a disaster. William junior had led a life of debauchery, drunkenness and extravagance until his father removed him.

William Wilberforce plumped to send his three younger sons to Oriel College. Oxford, and especially Oriel, was gaining a reputation for both learning and piety. Distinguished Fellows at Oriel included John Keble,⁸⁶ John Henry Newman,⁸⁷ Edward Pusey⁸⁸ and Richard Whately.⁸⁹ It seems that Wilberforce realised that if his sons were to make an impact upon the Anglican Church they should be released from the sheltered environment of their boyhood into the atmosphere of Toryism and the Established Church which prevailed at Oriel.⁹⁰

Samuel's friends at Oriel included Charles Anderson, Patrick Boyle and Sir George Prevost. These and others joined Samuel in a set nicknamed the Bethel Union because of the prominence of the fathers of several of them in religion and their own avoidance of Sunday parties. Samuel's main sporting activities were horse jumping and hunting. Samuel joined the United Debating Society (forerunner of the Oxford Union) and quickly established himself as a fluent debater with decidedly liberal

⁸⁵ Wilberforce & Wilberforce, Vol.5, pp.146-7.

⁸⁶ ODNB. Butler, P., 'John Keble (1792-1866)' (2006) pp.12. Church of England clergyman and poet. Leading Tractarian.

⁸⁷ ODNB. Ker, I., 'John Henry Newman (1801-90)' (2007), pp.21. Theologian, leading Tractarian, becoming Roman Catholic in 1845. Made Cardinal in 1879.

⁸⁸ ODNB. Cobb, P.G., 'Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-82)' (2006), pp.17. Church of England clergyman and leading Tractarian. Professor of Hebrew.

⁸⁹ ODNB. Brent, R., 'Richard Whately (1787-1863)' (2006), pp.20. Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin from 1831.

⁹⁰ Newsome, D., *The Parting of Friends* (London, 1966), p.61.

leanings.⁹¹ His father was concerned that Samuel was putting too much time and effort into the Debating Society, writing to him that ‘I should deeply regret it if it were to have the effect of making you too much of a politician’.⁹² Samuel left Oxford in 1826 with a First in Mathematics and a Second in Classics, his elder brother Robert having obtained a Double First three years earlier.

William Gladstone entered Christ Church in 1828. Christ Church was the richest and largest of the Oxford colleges. It was also politically, intellectually and socially the dominant college. Christ Church had produced more eminent statesmen, who included George Canning, than any other college. It also had a religious emphasis, the chapel doubling as the cathedral church for the diocese of Oxford. Gladstone enjoyed socialising and debating in his first two years. His increased efforts in the final year gained him a Double First. He became a leading light in the United Debating Society, usually espousing illiberal causes. His motion to censure the Wellington government for its pusillanimity in accepting Catholic emancipation carried the day by a single vote. His most notable speech in the Union was in vehement opposition to the Reform Bill when he easily carried the motion. Gladstone’s friends included Milnes Gaskell, Francis Doyle⁹³ and Charles Canning⁹⁴ (all from Eton); the Earl of Lincoln,⁹⁵ heir to the Duke of Newcastle; Walter Kerr Hamilton, later Bishop of Salisbury;⁹⁶ Thomas Acland;⁹⁷ Joseph Anstice⁹⁸ and the writer Martin Tupper.⁹⁹ Many of these

⁹¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.28-9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Vol.1 p.30.

⁹³ *ODNB*. Carlyle, E.I., ‘Sir Francis Hastings Charles Doyle, 2nd baronet (1810-88)’ (2004) pp.4. Commissioner of Customs and Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

⁹⁴ *ODNB*. Metcalf, T.R., ‘Charles John Canning, Earl Canning (1812-62)’ (2009), pp.11. Governor General and first Viceroy of India.

⁹⁵ *ODNB*. Munsell, D., ‘Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham-Clinton, 5th Duke of Newcastle under Lyme (1811-64)’ (2009), pp.7. Succeeded to dukedom in 1851. Peelite and Colonial Secretary.

⁹⁶ *ODNB*. Greenhill, W.A., ‘Walter Kerr Hamilton (1808-69)’ (2004), pp.5. Bishop of Salisbury from 1854.

⁹⁷ *ODNB*. Pollard, A.F. ‘Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 11th baronet (1809-98)’ (2007), pp.4. Politician and educational reformer.

friendships persisted and sometimes increased in intensity after Oxford, especially that with Sidney Herbert¹⁰⁰ who became a Peelite colleague of Gladstone. Henry Manning¹⁰¹ and James Hope¹⁰² were at the periphery of this group but became intense friends later. Denis Paz has explored Gladstone's long standing friendships with Doyle and Tupper, both of whom deplored Gladstone's progressively Liberal leanings yet accepted patronage from him. When demands for further financial patronage were turned down by Gladstone, each published memoirs in 1886 that publicly attacked him.¹⁰³

Early on at Oxford Gladstone was influenced by the ultra Evangelical Henry Bulteel of St Ebbe's church, an opponent of baptismal regeneration. Gladstone still had doubts on this issue. However, both William and his sister Anne had been delighted when the Evangelical J.B.Sumner was appointed Bishop of Chester in 1828. Sumner took the unevangelical view that baptism could regenerate. Anne's esteem for Sumner played a part in resolving the matter in William's mind. The acceptance of baptismal regeneration was reinforced by reading the sixteenth century divine, Richard Hooker. Gladstone stated in his diary on his birthday in 1829: 'We are regenerate by Baptism and Baptism alone.' At the same time he regarded himself as 'the chief of sinners'.¹⁰⁴ Gladstone remained an Evangelical for the rest of his time at Oxford, but was still undecided as to whether he had a vocation for the priesthood. This came to a head in August 1830 when discussion with friends and

⁹⁸ ODNB. Gordon, A., 'Joseph Anstice (1808-36)' (2009), pp.2. Classical scholar and hymn writer. Professor of Classical Literature at KCL from 1822 until his early death.

⁹⁹ ODNB. Dingley, R., 'Martin Farquhar Tupper (1810-1889)' (2004), pp.3. Poet and writer.

¹⁰⁰ ODNB. Matthew, H.C.G., 'Sidney Herbert, first Baron Herbert of Lea (1810-61)' (2009), pp.7. Peelite then Liberal politician. Secretary of War 1845-6 & 1852-5.

¹⁰¹ ODNB. Newsome, D., 'Henry Edward Manning (1808-92)' (2009), pp.18. Was Archdeacon of Chichester. Roman Catholic convert in 1851. Became Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

¹⁰² ODNB. Murphy, G.M., 'James Robert Hope-Scott (1812-73)' (2008), pp.4. Barrister. Converted to Roman Catholicism in 1851.

¹⁰³ Paz, D., 2009.

¹⁰⁴ GD, Vol.1, 29 Dec.1829.

correspondence with his father persuaded him that Holy Orders were not for him. One year later there was a hint as to his future career direction when he wrote in his diary: 'Politics are fascinating to me, perhaps too fascinating'.¹⁰⁵

Samuel's younger brother Henry went up to Oxford in 1826, the year of Samuel's graduation. Henry, like Samuel, became President of the Union. This office was held for one term and Gladstone (as well as Newman) had been President in the same year as Henry, although he was two years behind Henry. Although they must have known each other in the Union, the first mention of an acquaintance was in Gladstone's diary entry of 21 November 1829: 'Out with Wilberforce'.¹⁰⁶ Henry remained at Oxford after his degree, sitting for an Oriel fellowship which he failed to win. The next references to Henry were in March 1830; on the 25th 'Coffee with Wilberforce',¹⁰⁷ and on the 28th 'Sat with Wilberforce – liked him much'.¹⁰⁸ The next diary entry referring to Henry was in February 1831: 'Wilberforce breakfasted with me and staid (*sic*) talking – I like his society'.¹⁰⁹ Henry left Oxford in the summer of 1831. Henry had a spontaneous and attractive character,¹¹⁰ with an abundance of the *sprezzatura* which was possessed by his father and Samuel Wilberforce. By the summer of 1832 Henry had decided to prepare for Holy Orders. The friendship between him and Gladstone continued in occasional correspondence until Henry became a Roman Catholic in 1849. Robert Wilberforce had left his fellowship at Oxford in 1831 to travel in Germany. He was appointed a rector in Yorkshire the following year.

¹⁰⁵ *GD*, Vol.1, 29 Dec.1830.

¹⁰⁶ *GD*, Vol.1, 21 Nov.1829.

¹⁰⁷ *GD*, Vol.1, 25 March 1830.

¹⁰⁸ *GD*, Vol.1, 28 March 1830.

¹⁰⁹ *GD*, Vol.1, 10 Feb.1831.

¹¹⁰ Newsome, D., *The Parting of Friends* (London, 1966), p.114.

1.3 The Making of a Friendship

Samuel Wilberforce undertook a European tour after graduation, in the company of his friends Charles Anderson and Henry Lyte.¹¹¹ 1828 was a momentous year for Samuel. He married Emily Sargent in June and received Deacon's Orders in December. He became curate in charge at the village of Checkendon, in the Oxford diocese. Samuel was ordained priest in December 1829. His encounters with Dissenters, continued contacts with Oxford associates, and dismay at the prospects for the Established Church led him towards High Churchmanship. At the same time he regarded himself politically as 'a very High Tory',¹¹² condemning Peel's acceptance of Catholic emancipation. In 1830 he became rector of Brighthelmston in the Isle of Wight at the instigation of his second cousin and patron Charles Sumner, the Bishop of Winchester. He remained there for the next ten years in great happiness, proving to be an exemplary parish priest and establishing himself as the leading cleric on the Isle of Wight. While at Brighthelmston Samuel acquired a national reputation as an eloquent preacher and public speaker. In 1837 he and Lord Palmerston were both speaking at a meeting of the Diocesan Church Building Society. Samuel attacked Palmerston's speech with considerable fluency and vehemence,¹¹³ an encounter which probably had a detrimental effect on subsequent preferments when Palmerston was prime minister.

After leaving Oxford at the end of 1831 Gladstone also toured Europe, lingering for some time in Rome. On his return he was elected in December 1832, at the age of 22, as Member of Parliament for Newark. This borough was at the disposal of the Duke of Newcastle, the father of his friend the Earl of Lincoln. Two years later he

¹¹¹ *ODNB*. Litvack, L., 'Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)' (2004), pp.4. Anglican clergyman and hymn writer.

¹¹² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.107-8.

was appointed by Peel as Junior Lord of the Treasury and in January 1835 as Under Secretary for War and the Colonies. However, a Whig government was returned in April that year and he was out of office.

Gladstone's next recorded encounter with the Wilberforces was in July 1833 when he 'went to breakfast with old Mr Wilberforce [and] heard him pray with his family. Blessing and honour are upon his head'.¹¹⁴ Morley quotes the same diary entry, but it is in an expanded form and states that Gladstone was introduced to William Wilberforce by his son, without mentioning which one.¹¹⁵ He adds 'He is cheerful and serene, a beautiful picture of old age in sight of immortality'. Less than a month later, on 3rd August, Gladstone attended William Wilberforce's funeral.¹¹⁶ It is possible that Samuel and Gladstone met at the funeral, although there is no documented evidence for this.

Samuel's first letter to Gladstone was on 1 May 1834, requesting his support against Lord John Russell's marriage bill: 'You will not, I hope, think that I am making too free a use of the slight acquaintance which I can personally claim with you in sending you these few lines'. Samuel and the local clergy were opposed to the proposal that unordained persons could conduct marriage ceremonies: 'All that we ask for is that we may not be instrumental towards marriages unsanctified by religion; or to which her sanction is fraudulently conveyed by unqualified men.' He requested of Gladstone that 'if you should be present in the House at the time of its presentation and the opportunity should be favourable you might possibly enforce our views'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ *GD*, Vol.2, 25 July 1833.

¹¹⁵ Morley, Vol.1, p.106.

¹¹⁶ *GD*, Vol. 2, 3 Aug.1833.

¹¹⁷ Add. MS 44343, 1 May 1834.

Gladstone replied to Samuel by letter on 2 and 7 May,¹¹⁸ only for the government to drop the bill.

Samuel's brother Robert wrote to him in January 1835, recommending that Samuel make the acquaintance of Gladstone the next time he went to London. The first record of Samuel and Gladstone meeting was on 25 June 1835. Gladstone's diary entry for that day is: 'The Wilberforces (S & R) to breakf[ast]. Conv[ersation] on W.I. [West Indies] quest[ion] relative to Mr W[ilberforce]'s life',¹¹⁹ a reference to the biography of their father which the brothers were currently writing.

On 20 February 1838, Samuel visited the House of Commons where he 'had much talk with Smith, Gladstone and Acland'.¹²⁰ Both Gladstone and Acland were members of the 'Young Gentlemen', a ginger group that wanted to revive the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. The topic of conversation could well have been national education, a subject of concern to all of them. On 24 March, Samuel 'called on Gladstone'.¹²¹ On 20 April 1838, Samuel Wilberforce sent Gladstone a copy of the biography which he and Robert had written on their father. In an accompanying letter Samuel wrote: 'You will, I hope, accept as a pledge of friendly regard the copy of my Father's memoir.' His letter continues with prescience:

It would be an affectation in you which you are above, not to know that few young men have the weight you have in the House of Commons and are gaining rapidly throughout the country...what I want to urge upon you is that you should calmly look far before you; see the degree of weight and influence to which you may fairly...look forward in future years and thus act *now* with a view to *then*. There is no height to which you may not fairly rise in this country...you may at a future day wield the whole government of this land...I

¹¹⁸ *GD*, Vol.2, 2 and 7 May 1834.

¹¹⁹ *GD*, Vol.2, 25 June 1835.

¹²⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol 1, p.116.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.119.

would have you view yourself as one who may become the head of all the better feelings of this country, the maintainer of its Church and of its liberties, and who must now be fitting himself for this high vocation.¹²²

Gladstone replied: 'I fear entering on the subject to which you have given the chief part of your letter, because I know how large it is, and how oppressive...are the considerations with which it is connected'. There is a general mood of pessimism in this letter, mainly because 'the principles of civil government have decayed amongst us as much, I suspect, as those which are ecclesiastical'. The letter ends with Gladstone stating that 'whenever you are disposed to give me your faithful and free advice I shall be its most willing recipient'.¹²³ Gladstone wrote in his diary that same week: 'Began Wilberforce's life, which I was much gratified to receive'.¹²⁴

As was the practice of the time, sermons by well-known preachers were often published. Gladstone had read Samuel's 1838 sermon on 'The Power of God's Word needful for National Education'.¹²⁵ He had also 'read S. Wilberforce's (good) book on the Eucharist',¹²⁶ and his 'delightful' and 'excellent' sermons.¹²⁷ Gladstone also admired Samuel Wilberforce as a speaker. At a meeting of the Society for Suppression of the Slave Trade, held London in June 1840, Gladstone considered 'Sam Wilberforce a beautiful speaker: in some points resembling Macaulay'.¹²⁸

Summary

Both Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone came from strongly Evangelical families. Although both became High Churchmen they retained some basic tenets of Evangelicalism. Their fathers were Members of Parliament, but from different ends

¹²² Add. MS 44343, 20 April 1838.

¹²³ Add. MS 44343, 25 April 1838.

¹²⁴ *GD*, Vol.2, 24 April 1838.

¹²⁵ *GD*, Vol.2, 18 Feb.1839.

¹²⁶ *GD*, Vol.2, 21 April 1839.

¹²⁷ *GD*, Vol.2, 23 June and 12 July 1839.

¹²⁸ *GD*, Vol.3, 1 June 1840.

of the Tory spectrum. The two men, one a clergyman and the other already a politician met in 1835, possibly earlier, and while ecclesiastical issues and a mutual interest in education brought them together in the first instance, a mutual admiration had developed into a firm friendship by the early 1840s. This was to be further developed and consolidated in subsequent years.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE FRIENDSHIP

For both Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone the late 1830s and early 1840s was an important turning point which opened the way to their subsequent illustrious careers, together with the development of their public and private friendship.

2.1 A Developing Friendship

In March 1845, Samuel Wilberforce was appointed Dean of Westminster by Sir Robert Peel. By the end of the year he had become Bishop of Oxford. At a time when there was considerable divergence of outlook among clergymen, Wilberforce wished to unify those within the diocese by being ‘a “father in God” to men of *all* opinions amongst my clergy’.¹²⁹ He sought to improve and to invigorate diocesan institutions and clerical performance, always promoting the corporate life of the diocese. Line management was maintained through carefully selected archdeacons and rural deans. He travelled incessantly, greatly increasing the number of confirmation centres by the 1860s. Wilberforce regarded ordination as one of his most important personal responsibilities. He founded a theological college at Cuddesdon, close to the Episcopal palace. During his tenure in Oxford 106 new churches were built, 15 were rebuilt and 250 restored, while the number of livings in the gift of the bishop increased from 17 to 103. As J.W.Burgon¹³⁰ observed, ‘The Bishop of Oxford was inaugurating a new era in the history of the English episcopate’.¹³¹ Sabine Baring-

¹²⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.I, p.319.

¹³⁰ ODNB. Murphy, G.M., ‘John William Burgon (1813-1888)’ (2006), pp.5. Biblical scholar. Fellow of Oriel College & Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford. Latterly Dean of Chichester.

¹³¹ Burgon, R.W., *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (2 vols. London, 1888), Vol.2, p.16.

Gould considered that Wilberforce ‘was the first Bishop of the Victorian age to show what the duties of a bishop were’. As well as recasting ‘the whole idea of the Episcopate’, he ‘successfully raised the tone of clerical life’.¹³² It was generally agreed that Samuel Wilberforce’s twenty three years as Bishop of Oxford changed the face of the Church of England. Writing to Samuel’s son Reginald in 1879, Archbishop Tait stated that ‘I cannot doubt that a new idea of a Bishop’s work was set before the Church by your father’s appointment’.¹³³ A tribute to Wilberforce’s personal qualities appeared in a biography of his contemporary Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, whose daughter recalled:

The magical effect of his presence...his thrilling Confirmation addresses, his cordial appreciation of what was done by others, the brilliant wit of his conversation, the inimitable tones of his wonderfully modulated voice, and the fascination of his look and manner...How much of the poetry, life, and enthusiasm of Church work is due to Bishop Wilberforce! How much also of its organization and practical development!¹³⁴

Samuel Wilberforce even made an impression on the pragmatic Jane Carlyle when she witnessed a confirmation performed by him on 16 April 1856: ‘Heavens, how well he DID it! Even I was almost *touched* by the *tears in his voice* and the adorable tenderness of his exhortation!’¹³⁵

Arthur Burns has recently challenged the concept of what he has dubbed the ‘Wilberforce thesis’ with regard to diocesan reform. He believes that significant and widespread diocesan reform had commenced long before Wilberforce’s episcopate

¹³² Baring-Gould, p.174.

¹³³ Edwards, D.L., *Leaders of the Church of England 1828-1944* (Oxford, 1971) , p.93.

¹³⁴ Overton, J. H. & Wordsworth E., *Life of Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, 1807-1885* (London, 1890 edn.), pp.117-8.

¹³⁵ *Jane Welsh Carlyle’s Journal Oct 1855 – July 1856* (on line, Duke University), 16 April 1856.

and formed the context to his own achievement, running counter to the opinion of these contemporaries of Wilberforce.¹³⁶

Two years after his appointment to Oxford, Wilberforce had a severe setback due to the Hampden Controversy (Chapter 4). His mishandling of this matter, with a mixture of impulsiveness and vacillation, cost him his favoured position at Court and dented his reputation, possibly denying him the chance of promotion to Canterbury on the death of Archbishop Howley in 1848.¹³⁷ It was at this time that he acquired the nickname ‘Soapy Sam’.¹³⁸

Samuel Wilberforce played an important role in national debates on ecclesiastical issues and spoke frequently on secular matters in the House of Lords throughout the rest of his life. Strengthening and increasing the integrity of the Anglican Church were Wilberforce’s main objectives and he was always the defender of orthodoxy. He had a deep-rooted and violent antipathy to Roman Catholicism. His anti-Catholicism was of the High Church sort, based on the Roman Catholic refusal to admit Anglo-Catholic claims to catholicity. It was fuelled by the conversion to Rome of many close relatives. As a result of these defections he himself was unjustly considered in some quarters as a Romish sympathiser and at one time he seriously considered resigning his bishopric.¹³⁹

Later, after being passed over for Episcopal vacancies in York and London, Wilberforce was appointed by Gladstone as bishop of Winchester in 1869. Despite ill- health, Wilberforce continued to work as an energetic, reforming prelate in an

¹³⁶ Burns, A., *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c.1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999), pp.10-13.

¹³⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.496.

¹³⁸ For example, letter from Thomas Carlyle to Lady Ashburton, 14 March 1850: ‘The Right Revd of Oxford is getting up a Committee to “ interest the working man” in Prince Albert’s Exhibition...will you [serve]? “No with a thousand thanks, O soapy!”’ *The Carlyle Letters* on line (Duke University).

¹³⁹ Meacham, p.194.

enormous diocese. At the same time he was a prime mover in a number of national ecclesiastical initiatives.

Canon Burgon, who knew Samuel well, considered his personality to be a two edged sword:

His very excellences were a snare to him; his very gifts and graces proved his most effectual hindrances. He was *too* clever, *too* self-reliant, whereby he often put himself in a false position, and exposed himself to unfriendly criticism. Again, he was *too* persuasive, *too* fascinating in his manner, *too fertile in expedients*, and thus he furnished not a few with pleas for suspecting him of insincerity. Sure of himself and unsuspicious of others, he was habitually *too* confiding, *too* unguarded in his utterances. But above all, his besetting fault was that he was a vast deal *too facile*.¹⁴⁰

In 1841 William Gladstone was appointed Vice President of the Board of Trade in Sir Robert Peel's government, becoming President two years later. Gladstone supported Peel in his determination to repeal the Corn Laws. Lord Stanley left the government in protest at Peel's policy and Gladstone was appointed Colonial Secretary in his place. However, he lost his seat when, as a new member of the cabinet, he had to seek re-election. Gladstone's patron at Newark, the Duke of Newcastle, was a staunch defender of the Corn Laws and Gladstone did not stand there again. He was therefore a member of cabinet without having a seat. In 1846, after Peel had managed to carry the repeal of the Corn Laws, a coalition of Whigs and Protectionist Conservatives defeated him in the Commons. The split in the Conservative party became permanent. Gladstone returned to Parliament in 1847 as the MP for Oxford University, in effect as representative of the clergy who formed the majority of its graduates.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Burgon, Vol.2, pp.47-8.

¹⁴¹ Bebbington (1993), p.64.

December 1852 was a pivotal point in Victorian politics and Gladstone's career. Lord Derby (previously Lord Stanley) became Prime Minister after the fall of Lord John Russell's Whig government. Benjamin Disraeli became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Gladstone replied to Disraeli's budget speech so successfully, uniting the Peelites and Whigs to his cause, that the government was defeated in a vote on the budget. The union of Peelites and Whigs formed a coalition under the premiership of Lord Aberdeen with Gladstone as Chancellor. In the budget of 1853 Gladstone sought to produce a balance of taxation which was fair to all classes. He wished to improve the standard of living of the working class by not taxing their income but instead taxing their purchases.

Aberdeen's government fell in 1855 due to a Commons vote of No Confidence in the running of the Crimean war. Gladstone continued as Chancellor under the incoming Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, but resigned a month later because Palmerston had set up a committee to investigate the conduct of the Crimean war, which would have criticised the previous administration. Palmerston's position was strengthened in the general election of 1857, with the Peelites reduced to a small faction. Although Lord Derby was re-elected the following year with Disraeli as his Chancellor, Palmerston was returned to power in 1859. Gladstone again became Chancellor but was frustrated by Palmerston's insistence on increasing military and naval spending. Gladstone pursued his previous policy, reducing the number of articles liable to duty. He aimed to minimise income tax, hoping to phase it eventually out. At this time he created the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons which appraised Government spending at Departmental level. Gladstone's achievements as Chancellor brought him high public acclaim and popularity. Part of this was due to the high profile struggle he had with the House of Lords to abolish

excise duty on paper. The spin off from this success was that he subsequently received generally favourable publicity from the Press. His standing with the general public was further enhanced when some ambivalent remarks by Gladstone were interpreted as meaning that he was in favour of universal suffrage.

In 1864, the Palmerston government became embroiled in the Danish-German dispute over Schleswig-Holstein. The general mood within the cabinet was for non-intervention, despite entreaties by Denmark for Britain to honour an earlier undertaking by Palmerston to protect their interests. Parliament and the nation generally sympathised with Denmark. Lord Derby and Disraeli decided to raise a motion of censure on the Government, which was narrowly defeated in the Commons but was passed in the Lords.¹⁴² Just before he went to vote on 8 July 1864, Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone; 'Supporting what is counter to you gives me a pang I cannot describe. *Against you* in the long run, I do not believe it will be. Anything which breaks up, or tends to break up, Palmerston's supremacy must bring you nearer the post in which I long to see you'.¹⁴³

In 1865, Gladstone was rejected as MP for the University of Oxford when the electors opposed his views on reform. He then became Member for South Lancashire where his views were more in tune with the aspirations of the electorate. On the death of Palmerston in 1865 Russell became prime minister and Gladstone remained as Chancellor. Russell and Gladstone drew up the Reform Bill of 1866, which proposed that those who paid £7 a year for their home in rent should now receive the vote. The Bill was defeated, the government resigned and Derby became prime minister once again. Disraeli, in a counterblast to Gladstone, introduced a Bill which would enfranchise a much larger proportion of the population, the *vox populi* making

¹⁴² Shannon, Vol.1, pp.516-18.

¹⁴³ Add. MS 44344, 6 July 1864.

passage of the 1867 Reform Act a certainty. Disraeli became prime minister in February 1868. Nevertheless it was Gladstone, with a carefully plotted manifesto, who took office after a general election was called in December. The overall identity of the party was now Liberal rather than Whig.

The first measure of the Liberal ministry of 1868-74 was the disestablishment of the Irish Church, discussed in Chapter 5. The other major initiative was the Education Act of 1870, which had religious connotations, also discussed in Chapter 5. Other reforms involved the Army, trade unions and the legal system. Gladstone in the meantime had taken on the role of Chancellor as well as being prime minister. In 1874, the year after Samuel Wilberforce's death, the Liberals lost the election. Nevertheless, Gladstone's first government, as with his career as a whole, illustrates that a Christian sense of morality lay behind his reforming zeal. Gladstone applied to politics the principles of his hero, Bishop Butler,¹⁴⁴ namely a belief in providence, a generosity of spirit to opponents, and an understanding that all that is required in making decisions is a weighing up of all the available evidence and acting on probability.¹⁴⁵ Having made a decision, Gladstone was unwavering in his pursuit of the policy.

Despite their onerous public duties and responsibilities, Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone successfully maintained a strong personal friendship. Wilberforce's diary records his growing friendship with Gladstone in the early 1840s. They went for walks together when Wilberforce was staying at Windsor Castle in October 1841 and took breakfast together at Gladstone's house the next month.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ *ODNB*. Cunliffe, C. 'Joseph Butler (1692-1752)' (2004), pp.18. Moral philosopher and theologian. Bishop of Bristol and Durham.

¹⁴⁵ Matthew, pp.343-4.

¹⁴⁶ BL, C.186, Diary no. 5, esp. Nov.1841.

Samuel Wilberforce frequently sent Gladstone copies of his published sermons and his charges. Gladstone responded to Wilberforce's archidiaconal charge of 1843 by gently warning him that he might be taking too much upon himself:

I doubted in one or two places whether you allow the members of the Church all the liberty they have a right to claim: and what is I admit still more beyond my province I am apprehensive of the increase of trouble and diversity among us...from the extension of the practice of delivering (even partially) doctrinal changes beyond the Bench of Bishops.¹⁴⁷

Gladstone was making Wilberforce aware of a persistent fault, what Newsome has described as Wilberforce's 'inclination towards impatient censoriousness'.¹⁴⁸ Wilberforce acknowledged the danger and added:

It is most difficult to know at the present what to do in the sort of pseudo-episcopate into which so many causes have changed the Archidiaconate. For so much is some expression of opinion looked for by the clergy, that its suppression would appear like a shifty evasion of difficulties.¹⁴⁹

When Gladstone returned to the government as Colonial Secretary in 1845, Wilberforce added his congratulations: 'I cannot forbear expressing directly to yourself the great satisfaction with which on many grounds I rejoice in your return to administration of the country. I rejoice in it greatly strengthening the government, as being a guarantee of its actions on some most important subjects'.¹⁵⁰

In August 1847 Wilberforce visited Fasque in Scotland, where Sir John Gladstone, William's father, had a house and estate. The purpose of this visit was to consecrate a chapel which Sir John had built and endowed there. Gladstone's diary

¹⁴⁷ Newsome, p.298.

¹⁴⁸ Newsome, p.298.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in Meacham, p.40 as 'Add. MS 44343, 18 Dec.1843', but not found in BL.

¹⁵⁰ Add. MS 44343, 25 Dec.1845.

mentioned that he and Wilberforce ‘had much conversation’ and the Bishop ‘preached a most powerful sermon’.¹⁵¹

As will be described in Chapters 3 and 4, the early 1850s saw a number of external threats to, and internal divisions within the Church of England. Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone corresponded with each other and discussed all the important issues.

In January 1852 Gladstone stayed with Wilberforce at Cuddesdon. Their conversations led to the written summary of the current state of the Church of England (Chapter 4). Gladstone was clearly dissatisfied with the performance of the bishops. He urged that a revival of church unity required more effective Episcopal leadership; not only had the bishops made a supine response to the Gorham judgement,¹⁵² but ‘the English Episcopate...had no collective voice to defend our Articles and the Nicene Creed’ or to take a stance against Papal Aggression. It was not in the ruling of their dioceses that Gladstone generally found fault with the bishops, but as the body which represented the Church in Parliament. He was aware that there were some bishops who would stand firm to the Church’s teaching, but the majority (including the Archbishop of Canterbury) seemed utterly indifferent to upholding any dogmatic teaching in the Church.¹⁵³ Wilberforce replied:

‘For utterly depressing as [your letter’s] tone is to me I value so highly the power of open speaking with you that I am really grateful to you for writing it – nothing can very easily exceed the gloominess of my own views of all around us’. He thought that recent appointments to the Episcopate could only ‘bring us into every conceivable

¹⁵¹ *GD*, Vol.3, 26–31 Aug. 1847.

¹⁵² See Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ *BL*, *HK*, 31 Dec.1851.

evil'. In addition, he considered the 'Romanising trait' threatened the existence of Anglicanism.¹⁵⁴

The bishops had also had a bad press. Wilberforce accused Gladstone of being 'biased by the incessant vituperations of the *Morning Chronicle* etc. to deal unfairly with many of the Bishops'. At the same time Wilberforce once again blamed Russell's 'miserable appointments', as well as 'the fearful weakness caused by the character of the Primate'.¹⁵⁵ Gladstone's repost was that:

It is the conduct of the body [of bishops] outside of the Diocesan relationship - as to the representatives of the entire Church in the face of the State and the country, and as guards of the precious deposit of her faith as well as of her authority - that fills me with gloomy apprehension.

Until the bishops found a way of acting together in the best interests of the Church and faith, Gladstone suggested that it would be better 'for each bishop who feels all this to take his own line, to leave off measures which belie the true state of the case by putting the face of unity upon this divided body, to recognise the facts which are staring every man in the face, and join with those among his brethren who are of convictions similar to his own'.¹⁵⁶

This last letter stimulated the invitation for Gladstone to go to Cuddesdon in January 1852.

This dialogue illustrates not only Gladstone's concerns about the divisions within the Anglican Church and the lack of cohesive leadership, but also that he regarded Wilberforce as being the bishop most likely to be receptive to his views and make a positive response to them. In this instance the debate between Gladstone and Wilberforce gave a kick start to Convocation. Certainly Convocation would not have come into existence in the mid-nineteenth century without the persuasion and

¹⁵⁴ Add. MSS 44343 27 May 1851.

¹⁵⁵ Add. MS 44343, 26 Dec. 1851.

¹⁵⁶ BL, HK, 31 Dec. 1851. Cited in Meacham p.236.

persistence of Samuel Wilberforce. The support and advice he received from Gladstone was an important factor.

In July 1852 Samuel Wilberforce, accompanied by his brother Robert, made his first visit to Hawarden. This visit lasted for five days, with much discussion on the Church and Convocation.¹⁵⁷ Samuel Wilberforce visited Hawarden on ten occasions between 1852 and 1872.¹⁵⁸ These visits, usually in October and occasionally in July, were during the long parliamentary recess.

In October 1853, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Aberdeen's government, Gladstone was invited to unveil a statue of Sir Robert Peel in Manchester. He took the opportunity to turn the visit into a barnstorming tour, which became a template for his future electioneering visits to provincial cities. On this occasion Gladstone was joined by Samuel Wilberforce when the London to Manchester train stopped at Bletchley. The two 'had many matters to discuss' on the train.¹⁵⁹ The following day a service at the Cathedral was followed by the unveiling of the Peel monument, during which Gladstone 'spoke to the cracking of my voice'. They then moved to the Town Hall for lunch, where the double act dominated proceedings. Gladstone spoke for an hour and a quarter and was then followed by Wilberforce who, according to Gladstone, 'laid a strong hand upon the company'.¹⁶⁰ The next day, at the laying of the foundation stone for a new school, Wilberforce 'preached a grand sermon'. Afterwards they went to lunch 'where we were obliged to make speeches'.¹⁶¹ They met up with Robert Wilberforce and all three departed from Manchester and went to Hawarden. Much of this visit by the Wilberforce brothers was taken up by discussions during long walks between Robert and Gladstone on the

¹⁵⁷ *GD*, Vol. 4, 19-23 July 1852.

¹⁵⁸ *GD*, Vols.4-7: in 1857, 1858, 1859, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1869 & 1878.

¹⁵⁹ *GD*, Vol.4, 10 Oct.1853.

¹⁶⁰ *GD*, Vol.4, 12 Oct.1853.

¹⁶¹ *GD*, Vol.4, 13 Oct.1853.

subject of Robert's increasing alienation from the Anglican Church. However, time was found to talk with Samuel on the Court of Appeal and other matters.¹⁶²

Samuel Wilberforce admired Gladstone's stance in resigning from Palmerston's cabinet in February 1855:

As you are no longer a cabinet minister I may venture to say to you, what I cannot help suppressing, how entirely I agree with the course you have seen it right to follow in these last difficulties, and how much I rejoice (deeply lamenting the probable effects of your absence from Lord Palmerston's cabinet) that you have not continued in it on the condition of agreeing to this committee [to investigate the conduct of the Crimean War]...It is refreshing to see somewhere amongst our governors real loftiness of aim and purity of motive combined with great gifts of intellect.¹⁶³

On 26th February 1856, Samuel Wilberforce's eldest son Herbert died of tuberculosis, contracted when he was serving in the Royal Navy in the Crimea. Gladstone wrote to Wilberforce, assuring him that he shared in his grief and commenting that: 'You are called to great powers and great duties, but also to great trials and sorrows'.¹⁶⁴ Wilberforce replied: 'I cannot forbear expressing to you my hearty thanks for your most kind and welcome letter. I cling to true affection as one of the good things and amongst the best of them God has spared to me out of the great shipwreck of my affections'.¹⁶⁵ Subsequently Gladstone was a member of the committee which organised a public memorial to Herbert.¹⁶⁶

Samuel Wilberforce's next visit to Hawarden, in November 1856, illustrates how openly Gladstone shared his political opinions with the Bishop. Wilberforce wrote in his diary that Gladstone was 'very strong against Palmerston and the present Peelite position...and manifestly leans towards a Conservative alliance'. He quoted

¹⁶² *GD*, Vol.5, 15–19 Oct.1853.

¹⁶³ Add. MS 44343, 27 Feb.1855.

¹⁶⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.308.

¹⁶⁵ Add MS 44344, 4 March 1856.

¹⁶⁶ Meacham, p.273.

Gladstone as saying: ‘Palmerston has never been a successful Minister: great love of power, and even stronger a principle of false shame – cares not how much dirt he eats, but it must be gilded dirt’.¹⁶⁷

In June 1857 Gladstone publicly praised Samuel Wilberforce in a speech at Oxford. Wilberforce’s friend Arthur Gordon was present and reported: ‘It was great pleasure to listen to *him* praising *you* and saying...that here you are regarded as you will be hereafter by the world at large, viz. as one of the illustrations of the English name’.¹⁶⁸ This speech was made on the third anniversary of Cuddesdon Theological College. Gladstone wrote in his diary: ‘I had to speak and proposed the Bishop’s health in his absence [in London] as a great Bishop. Certainly Cuddesdon with its Bishop and all that he is doing is a goodly sight’.¹⁶⁹ In October 1857, Samuel Wilberforce stayed briefly at Hawarden, prior to a speaking engagement with Gladstone in Chester on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Once again Gladstone spoke openly on political events to Wilberforce, who quoted him in his diary:

I greatly felt being turned out of office, I saw great things to do. I longed to do them. I am losing the best years of my life out of my natural service, yet I have never ceased to rejoice that I am not in office with Palmerston, when I have seen the tricks, the shufflings, the frauds he daily has recourse to as to his business. I rejoice not to sit on the Treasury bench with him.¹⁷⁰

Gladstone’s view on their Chester speeches was that the ‘Bishop of Oxford made a very powerful speech and I a very ineffective one.’¹⁷¹

The Palmerston government was defeated in the House of Commons on its Conspiracy to Murder Bill in 1858 and Lord Derby became prime minister. There

¹⁶⁷ *GD*, Vol.5, 4 & 5 Nov.1856.

¹⁶⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.342.

¹⁶⁹ *GD*, Vol.5, 9 June 1857.

¹⁷⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.349.

¹⁷¹ *GD*, Vol.5, 12 Oct.1857.

was some talk of Gladstone joining the new Tory government, but this was not a viable option. Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone, stating that he ‘did indeed rejoice in the downfall of the old imposter – though the consequent arrangements have sorely disappointed me because they have not brought you into power. I hope *that* day will not be long delayed’.¹⁷² A visit by Wilberforce to Hawarden in July 1858 was combined with a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel tour of North Wales followed by a holiday. As usual there was ‘much talk with Gladstone’.¹⁷³ Having resisted Derby’s overtures to join the government, Gladstone left England and for three months acted as High Commissioner of the Ionian islands, despite the earnest pleading of Wilberforce.¹⁷⁴

In May 1859 the Gladstone family went to Cuddesdon in order for Wilberforce to confirm Stephen. Gladstone considered that ‘the administration by the Bishop was incomparably suited to take hold’.¹⁷⁵

Palmerston became prime minister again in June 1859. Gladstone accepted the Chancellorship, despite voting with the Tories in the preceding vote of confidence. He wrote to Wilberforce: ‘It is quite a mistake to suppose that the formation of this cabinet is the determining crisis of its political character. That must come in its development’.¹⁷⁶

In 1862, Samuel Wilberforce hoped to become Archbishop of York, in succession to Longley who had become Archbishop of Canterbury. Wilberforce hinted to Gladstone that he wished to be appointed to York:

¹⁷² Add. MS 44344, 8 March 1858.

¹⁷³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.383-4.

¹⁷⁴ Butler P., *Church, State and Tractarianism* (Oxford, 1982), p.148.

¹⁷⁵ *GD*, Vol.5, 8 May 1859.

¹⁷⁶ BL, 36, f. 177. 17 June 1859.

If a Yorkshire man with a Yorkshire tradition: a power of moving the masses; and power of getting at the Methodists; were placed there. (*sic*) There might be a true revival of the Church and the faith.¹⁷⁷

Gladstone wrote a tactful but realistic response the following day:

You are the person who ought to succeed to it. But can I help to bring about this event? an event that would give me the liveliest and most cordial pleasure.? In my own opinion any attempt made by me from myself to effect the purpose would not succeed and would even in all likelihood cause a political recoil and tend to damage.¹⁷⁸

In reply, Samuel Wilberforce indicated that Gerald Wellesley, the Dean of Windsor, had told him that the Queen ‘was warm to the appointment I told you I sought’. He continued: ‘I should approve of your comparative inactivity at such a crisis. As it is I can only trustingly acquiesce,’ adding ironically ‘Though to others I defend your course altogether’.¹⁷⁹

Gladstone was quick to respond, and was clearly losing patience:

As a colleague of Lord Palmerston I have no share in making the appointments to the Primacy...The utmost I can do is, considering that I sit for Oxford, to make a representation and recommendation to him, and there is absolutely nothing more which consistently and with usage and propriety is in my power!¹⁸⁰

Wilberforce replied that he had just preached to a huge and attentive congregation in Doncaster. ‘If our Church’s system were faithfully upheld in the highest parts the results might be incalculable for the Province’.¹⁸¹ Gladstone response was a lengthy critique of Wilberforce’s role:

You have opposed many changes which you have thought injurious, and as regards many of those you have opposed, I certainly am in no position to find

¹⁷⁷ Add. MS 44344, 9 Sept. 1862.

¹⁷⁸ Add. MS 44344, 10 Sept. 1862.

¹⁷⁹ Add. MS 44344, 21 Sept. 1862.

¹⁸⁰ Add. MS 44344, 23 Sept. 1862.

¹⁸¹ Add. MS 44344, 26 Sept. 1862.

fault with you. But I think I should be puzzled should Lord Palmerston to say to me: "I will not dwell on the question of which of the changes asked for he has opposed, but I will desire you to tell me of which of these problems he has, as a leader of the clergy, publicly and at his own risk promoted the solution." I seem to observe that the character you have got with politicians among which I live is that of a most able prelate getting all you can for the Church, asking more, giving nothing. I know of certain things which you have as I believe been ready to concede. But the question put to me...would be has he not in this place in Parliament and with his great power there and elsewhere been in all (ecclesiastical) things obstructive? What help has he given us, which part of his enormous labours has he spent, in bringing the mind of the clergy, even with difficulty and risk, to anticipate this time with this or that, and to make, while they are still of some value, the sacrifices which it requires?¹⁸²

This criticism was not really fair. Samuel Wilberforce had been an active supporter of the Ten Hour Bill and had also spoken in the House of Lords in favour of free trade and abolition of the Corn Laws.¹⁸³

Samuel Wilberforce in his reply to Gladstone argued that he had made some attempts to bring Church and State together, citing his support of the bill to reform Oxford University, and his willingness to support the government on the Education Question. The Evangelical nominations to the Episcopate had made cooperation difficult. He added: 'Now I see more clearly what you did mean it only increases my affectionate feeling towards you'.¹⁸⁴

Gladstone wrote to Palmerston, urging the claims of Samuel Wilberforce. He stressed that he was a fine bishop, a great preacher, a unifying influence within the Church; even making a virtue of Wilberforce's socialising by suggesting that it was desirable to have a prelate who could 'maintain the hold and influence of religion

¹⁸² Add. MS 44344, 2 Oct. 1862.

¹⁸³ *Hansard*, HL Deb. 12 June 1846. Vol. 87, cc. 322-4, 331-3.

¹⁸⁴ Add. MS 44344, 4 Oct. 1862.

upon the higher circles of civil life.’ However, he did add: ‘those who think he meddles too much in London would gladly see him removed to a spot where he would no longer be within an hour of the Metropolis’.¹⁸⁵ When Gladstone sent Samuel Wilberforce a copy of his letter to Palmerston, the bishop was grateful: ‘It...humbled me to see how far too kindly you judged of me; cheered me more than I can say to know that such a man as you so wrote about me’.¹⁸⁶ It was to no avail; Palmerston appointed William Thomson, an Evangelical, who had been Samuel Wilberforce’s curate and had only been Bishop of Gloucester for one year.

Samuel Wilberforce had Gladstone’s disapproval at other times in the 1860s for being reluctant to support the abolition of the oath sworn by mayors that they would not use their office to oppose the Established Church (Chapter 4) and Disestablishment of the Irish Church (Chapter 5).

2.2 The Defection of Family and Friends to Rome

The brothers Robert, Samuel and Henry Wilberforce all married into clerical families. Samuel and Henry married Emily and Mary, daughters of John Sargent, a devout and well respected Evangelical who was Rector of Lavington and Graffham in Sussex. Robert married Agnes Wrangham, the daughter of the Archdeacon of Cleveland and of the East Riding. Two other young clergymen with Evangelical upbringings also married daughters of John Sargent; Henry Edward Manning married Caroline and George Dudley Ryder married Sophia. Manning and Ryder belonged to the same world as the Wilberforces and both were contemporaries of one or other of

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Jenkins, p. 242.

¹⁸⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.63.

the Wilberforce boys at Oxford.¹⁸⁷ Most members of the Sargent ménage were to convert to Roman Catholicism.

The first of the Roman Catholic converts were George and Sophia Ryder. George Ryder was one of Henry Wilberforce's closest friends when he was an undergraduate. By 1833 he was drawn into John Henry Newman's circle at Oriel.¹⁸⁸ By 1836, when he obtained a wealthy living near Winchester, he was an active Tractarian. In 1845, the Ryders went abroad for the sake of Sophia's poor health and Newsome argues that Ryder's heart was firmly in the Roman Church before he commenced this continental tour.¹⁸⁹ His feelings were no doubt influenced by Newman's recent succession. In April 1846 Ryder fell dangerously ill in Rome and, feeling that death might be approaching, he was received into the Roman Church. Sophia followed him two days later.

Next came the succession of Henry (1807-1873) and Mary Wilberforce (1811-1878). Henry studied privately with Newman, who had a high opinion of his intellect, during four long vacations from 1827 until 1830.¹⁹⁰ Under Newman's influence and advice Henry decided to take Holy Orders. He was ordained deacon in 1834 and, just married, was appointed as perpetual curate of Bransgore. In 1843 Henry was appointed to the vicarage of East Farleigh, near Maidstone, which had once been held by his brother Robert.

The 1840s had been a difficult time for Henry and Mary. Four of their nine children died between 1841 and 1853. In 1849, when cholera broke out among Irish hop-pickers working in East Farleigh, Henry and Mary ministered to the sick and dying, together with some Roman Catholic priests and nuns. As Newsome states, this

¹⁸⁷Newsome, p.3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.152.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.310.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.110.

event may well have been the turning point in their lives. After Newman's defection, they both felt a deep attraction towards the Roman Church and despite the discouragement of Manning,¹⁹¹ they were both received into the Roman Catholic church in 1850.¹⁹² As a married former parson, Henry was excluded from both his clerical and legal vocations. For the rest of his life he eked out an impecunious existence as an author, journalist and publisher of Roman Catholic newspapers.

Henry Manning¹⁹³ became the most distinguished of all who left the Anglican Church for Rome, being appointed Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in 1865. When Manning went up to Balliol College in 1827 he chose Charles Wordsworth of Christ Church as his private tutor. Wordsworth was also William Gladstone's tutor and this common link formed the basis of a deepening friendship between the two students.¹⁹⁴ Manning returned to Oxford as a Fellow of Merton College in April 1832 and took deacon's orders in December of that year.¹⁹⁵ His friend Henry Wilberforce immediately arranged a temporary engagement for him as curate to John Sargent.¹⁹⁶ Samuel Wilberforce officiated at the wedding of Henry Manning to Caroline Sargent in November 1833. Caroline died four years later. Manning was presented with the Lavington living by Caroline's grandmother, having taken priest's orders immediately after John Sargent's death in May 1833.

Samuel Wilberforce also officiated at the wedding of George Dudley Ryder to Sophia Sargent in July 1834, the same month that Henry Wilberforce married her sister Mary. Samuel Wilberforce's wife Emily died in March 1841 and Sophia Ryder in 1850.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.354-5.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.358-9.

¹⁹³ See Pereiro J., *Cardinal Manning: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1998) and *'Ethos' and the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2008).

¹⁹⁴ Newsome, p.68.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.148-9.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.111.

Samuel was the closest of the Wilberforce brothers to Manning during the ten years following Manning's marriage. Manning and James Hope had advised Gladstone when he wrote *The State in its Relations with the Church*, although Manning had mixed views on the Roman Church at that time, writing to Gladstone in 1838:

I abhor and tremble at Romish error...but I cannot refuse to sympathise with what is high and true and lovely in their system...The English Church is a real substantive Catholic body capable of development and all perfection – able to lick up and absorb all that is true and beautiful in all Christendom into itself – and this is our problem.¹⁹⁷

In December 1840 Manning was appointed Archdeacon of Chichester. Now a national figure, he seemed destined for early elevation to the bench of bishops. Manning had been a committed Tractarian for several years, although he distanced himself from Newman on some issues such as Tract 90 and clarified his position in *The Unity of the Church*, which was published in 1842 and dedicated to Gladstone.

John Henry Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church in October 1845. Two days before he had completed his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, in which he argued that the Christianity of history was not Protestantism. Samuel Wilberforce assured Gladstone that 'the book has no force whatsoever...'¹⁹⁸ but Gladstone was not so sure, stating:

The work makes upon me individually no impression adverse to her [the Church of England's] claim on my allegiance; but yet I think it is a book which, for its own sake *and* on account of the influence of its author, ought to be taken into consideration, with a view to answer by one or more of our very best heads.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Newsome, p.267.

¹⁹⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.328.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.328.

The person who Gladstone invited to produce a riposte to Newman's book was Manning. Unfortunately, Manning found Newman's arguments unanswerable and in August 1846 informed Gladstone that he could not continue with the project because he was so shaken by recent secessions to Rome. As Newsome pointed out, this was at variance with Manning's diary entry in May 1846 when he considered the Church of Rome to be nearer the truth and he no longer considered himself an Anglican.²⁰⁰ In February 1847 Manning fell seriously ill and spent ten months convalescing abroad. The appointment of R.D.Hampden as Bishop of Hereford by Lord John Russell against the wishes of the Church in 1847 and the judgement by the judicial committee of the Privy Council in the Gorham case (see Chapter 4 below) convinced him of the inherent Erastianism of the Church of England.

On 8 September 1850, Gladstone wrote to Samuel Wilberforce:

It seems to me likely that if [Manning] shall go, he will do it upon broad grounds reaching far back into history as well as forward into the future...in consequence of the equivocal and hesitating attitude of the Church of England during these past months of crisis with respect to the maintenance of faith...²⁰¹

Wilberforce replied to Gladstone from Lavington on 14 September:

My stay here has let me see much of Manny (*sic*). Never has he been so affectionate, so open, so fully trusting with me...But alas! It has left on my mind the full conviction that he *is* lost to us...He seems to me to have followed singly, exactly the course which the Roman Church has followed as a body. He has gone back into those early times when, what afterwards became their corruptions, were only the germ buds of Catholic usages...until he can excuse to a great degree their practical corruptions and justify altogether their doctrinal rightness...²⁰²

Gladstone replied on September 17 that he thought that, even before the Gorham Judgement, Manning's mind had become so imbued with the Roman Catholic faith

²⁰⁰ Newsome, p.321.

²⁰¹ BL, I. C193, 8 Sept.1850.

²⁰² Add. MS 44343, 14 Sept.1850.

that he had ceased to struggle against these new convictions. Gladstone had the impression that Manning was convinced of the authority of the Church of England and believed in her mission, yet he could not disguise from himself that there were things in the Roman Church which he preferred.²⁰³ On 6 April 1851 Manning and his friend James Hope were received into the Roman Catholic Church. Gladstone describes this as ‘a day of pain’.²⁰⁴ The day after Manning and Hope became Roman Catholics, Gladstone wrote: ‘Hope too is gone. They were my two props. Their going may be to me a sign that my work is gone with them’.²⁰⁵ On 11 April 1851, Gladstone confided his feelings to Wilberforce:

I do indeed feel the loss of Manning, if and as far as I am capable of feeling anything...my conversations with Hope have not left any corresponding impression upon my mind with regard to him.²⁰⁶

Although Samuel Wilberforce did not have the academic and forensic turn of mind with which Manning and Hope engaged with Gladstone, he now assumed the role of Gladstone’s main confidant on Church matters. There is a telling entry in Gladstone’s diary for 11 May 1851: ‘[Hope] and Manning’s secession: the loss of all resolution to carry forward the little self-discipline I never had’.²⁰⁷ Matthew has pointed out that Hope and Manning’s apostasy had literally ‘demoralised’ Gladstone and that confrontation with prostitutes was followed by self-scourging.²⁰⁸

In 1854 Robert Wilberforce went over to Rome. After a distinguished undergraduate career at Oriel, Robert gained a Fellowship there and became the colleague of the future leading lights in the Oxford Movement: John Keble, Newman, Pusey and Hurrell Froude. He was ordained priest in 1828. In 1832 Robert was

²⁰³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.47-8.

²⁰⁴ *GD*, Vol.4, 6 April 1851.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.4, 7 April 1851.

²⁰⁶ Morley, Vol.1, p.387.

²⁰⁷ *GD*, Vol.4, 11 May 1851.

²⁰⁸ Matthew, p.93.

appointed to the living at East Farleigh in Kent. Agnes died in 1834. He remarried in 1837 and in August 1840 the family moved to Burton Agnes, near Beverley. In January 1841 Robert was appointed Archdeacon of the East Riding, succeeding his father-in-law who was retiring.

From 1833 until 1838 Robert and Samuel Wilberforce wrote the five volume *Life and Letters* of their father. Robert did not find this congenial work because of his increasing antipathy to Evangelicalism and his increasing sympathy to Newman's representation of Anglicanism as the *via media* between Roman Catholicism and continental Protestantism.

In 1843, Manning and Robert became close friends and, when Manning found himself cast in the role of the new leader of the Tractarians following Newman's defection in 1845, he recognised Robert's superior scholarship and frequently sought his advice.²⁰⁹ Robert subsequently produced three substantial volumes: *The Doctrine of the Incarnation* (1848), *The Doctrine of Holy Baptism* (1849) and *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (1853). In summary, Robert set out the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the doctrine of the real presence in the Eucharist, although he did not accept the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, while Tractarian incarnationism becomes the great objective fact of Christianity. Like Manning, Robert was disillusioned by the apparent inherent Erastianism of the Church of England as illustrated by the Hampden dispute and the Gorham judgement.

From 1851 onwards Robert Wilberforce entered a period of spiritual anguish as his brother Samuel, together with Gladstone, Pusey and Keble strove to keep him within the Anglican fold, while Newman, Manning and Henry Wilberforce presented

²⁰⁹ ODNB. Newsome, D., 'Robert Isaac Wilberforce (1802-1857)' (2006), p.7.

him with arguments to join them.²¹⁰ Further personal anguish occurred in 1853 with the death of his second wife. In the end it was the question of the authority of the church and the inadmissibility of the Royal Supremacy that led him to opt for Rome. Robert published his conclusions on these issues in *An Inquiry into the Principles of Church Authority* (1854).

Many letters passed from Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone to Robert Wilberforce, attempting to dissuade him from leaving the Church of England. Gladstone invited Robert to Hawarden in January 1852, commenting in his diary: 'We conversed anxiously and late. He has sunk since we last met. I mean in his steadfastness to C of E but I hope may get hold'.²¹¹ Robert also spent several days at Hawarden in October 1853, together with Samuel, when much time was spent in discussion. Gladstone remarked: 'Conversation on our difficulties which touch him very nearly.' And: 'An interesting talk but one of heavy responsibility'.²¹²

In a letter to Samuel three days later, Gladstone took an optimistic view:

He says more to me...because of the tenderness of the relation between you which makes him dread the pain you would feel from even the appearance of conflict with him on subjects pertaining to the history and attitude of the Church...There is room for fear as well as hope – but I think more for hope than for fear...He never so much as glances at going into the Church of Rome while he feels but ill at ease in an official and public position.²¹³

In October 1854 Robert stayed at Lavington with Samuel and Gladstone, who must have tried hard to reason Robert out of his dilemma. Writing to Samuel afterwards, Robert stated:

I am much encouraged to remain quiet by Gladstone's influence and arguments, in addition to yours and Keble's...and you say truly that if I could

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5.

²¹¹ *GD*, Vol.4, 12 Jan.1852.

²¹² *GD*, Vol.4, 15 & 19 Oct.1853.

²¹³ *BL*, II.K, 20 Oct. 1853.

so employ myself as to give over thinking of my principles I should be safe, and I fully believe it, but this is a mode of proceeding in which a person might manage to remain a Methodist, a Mahometan (*sic*), or a Mormon'.²¹⁴

Gladstone's interpretation of this encounter was: 'He leaves me in doubt and fear, tho' not without hope; and with a sense of how ill I have done my part'.²¹⁵ Robert Wilberforce had already resigned his preferments in August 1854. In October he left for Paris and was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Gladstone was not given to hyperbole, but the high regard in which he held Robert Wilberforce is shown in a letter to him on 24 September 1854:

[You] have by the sheer force and merit of your labours established an association between your own name and the living tradition of the Catholic Faith in the Church of England respecting the Incarnation, which I can only compare...to what the association was between the name of St. Augustine and the doctrine of original sin, or the name of St. Athanasius and that of the Trinity. I am not, as I trust, a flatterer...I have long seen that the care and charge of this great dogma, and of its consequences had...devolved for our day and generation upon you.²¹⁶

Gladstone wrote in similar vein to Samuel Wilberforce: 'He stands at the head of our living divines. His withdrawal from the Church of England could be compared to nothing but that of Newman and of Manning, and I am not sure that the blow would not be as great as either'.²¹⁷ Gladstone expressed with passion his views on conversion to Samuel Wilberforce:

For could I, with reference to my own precious children, think that one of them might possibly live to strike, through sincerity of thinking he did God service, such a stroke, how far rather would I that he had never been born.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.256.

²¹⁵ *GD*, Vol.4, 12 Oct.1854.

²¹⁶ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.367-9.

²¹⁷ Quoted in Newsome, p.402.

²¹⁸ Add. MS 44467, 17 Oct.1854.

Robert Wilberforce entered the Accademia Ecclesiastica in Rome on the Pope's nomination. While in minor orders he died of gastric fever on 3 February 1857. The nap hand of three Wilberforce brothers and two brothers-in-law who became Roman Catholic converts was finally completed when *William*, the wastrel eldest brother, converted in 1863.

Samuel Wilberforce also suffered the pain of losing another, much loved family member to Rome. In 1868, his daughter Ella and her husband Henry Pye, who was a prebend of Litchfield, were taken into the Roman Catholic Church. When this was announced, Samuel Wilberforce was staying at Hawarden. He wrote from there to his son Ernest:

I do not feel to care about anything; everything has lost its interest. I know by experience that if I am brave and go on, by degrees life will resume its powers...I discipline my spirit not to feel unkindly to one who has been my plague ever since I knew him and has robbed me of my only daughter in blood and brought reproach on the Church...As to the Papistry itself, I only more than ever see it to be the great Cloaca into which all vile corruptions of Christianity run naturally and loathe it.²¹⁹

Gladstone noted in his diary that day: 'Distressing news: the Bishop's daughter and son in law have fallen into the Roman pit'.²²⁰

The only close relative of Gladstone who converted to Roman Catholicism was his sister Helen Jane (1814-1880). A woman of high intelligence, she enjoyed a period of considerable intimacy with her brother William in the late 1820s and early 1830s.²²¹ In 1842 Helen became a Roman Catholic. As Morley put it: 'Her somewhat peculiar nature led to difficulties that taxed patience and resource to the uttermost.'²²² After her conversion she became a drug addict. When she became a Roman Catholic

²¹⁹ BL, I. C205. 24 Oct. 1868.

²²⁰ GD, Vol. 6, 24 Oct. 1868.

²²¹ Matthew, p.5.

²²² Morley, Vol.1, p.318.

Gladstone advised his father to expel her from his house and was dismayed when the old man's paternal affection prevented this.²²³ Gladstone went to Germany for two months in the futile hope of persuading Helen to give up laudanum. One advantage of this trip was that Gladstone had the opportunity of meeting the free-thinking Catholic theologian Dr Döllinger. Matthew provides evidence that her strong-willed brother ground Helen down and exiled her, emotionally and morally as well as physically.²²⁴ When Helen died the Gladstone family were convinced that she had renounced mainstream Roman Catholicism and at least had died an Old Catholic – in which case Helen would be in one of the small nationalist churches which were separated from Rome and supported by the excommunicated Döllinger.²²⁵ Helen was buried at Fasque according to the rite of the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

2.3 The Passing of Friends

Correspondence between Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone in the early 1860s, when close friends and relatives were lost to them in life or by death, also reflected a mutual sympathy and empathy between them.

Mrs Sargent, Samuel Wilberforce's mother in law, died in July 1861. She had looked after domestic affairs at Cuddesdon for him and Wilberforce sorely missed her. Writing to Gladstone on 10 July, Wilberforce described Mrs Sargent as being 'still so young, so entirely sympathising, so able to enter into everything – of heart, of mind, of intellect, of soul – that the contrast I look forward to in my lonely house is what could scarcely be believed'.²²⁶ Gladstone replied the following day: 'We feel very deeply with you under the laceration of spirit which Mrs Sargent's death must

²²³ Matthew, p.89.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.329.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.328.

²²⁶ Add. MS 44344, 10 July 1861.

have brought upon you. However bright her lot may be, you, with your immense labours, and the cravings of your mind and heart, must sorely indeed feel the privation'.²²⁷

Three close political associates of Gladstone died in the early 1860s. Sidney Herbert, a contemporary of Gladstone's at Oxford, and a fellow Peelite cabinet minister, died in August 1861. Despite some disputes in cabinet, Gladstone greatly admired Herbert and was distressed by the death of his old friend.²²⁸ Wilberforce was also upset, recording in his diary: 'Lord Herbert dead alas! alas! what a breach'.²²⁹ He preached at a memorial meeting for Sidney Herbert, where, according to Gladstone, 'Bp of Oxford surpassed himself'.²³⁰

Sir James Graham²³¹ died in October 1861. Graham was a Peelite who subsequently played an important part in the evolution of the broad Liberal governing coalition. Graham was a great admirer of Gladstone, telling Wilberforce on 27 September 1856 that Gladstone was 'In the highest sense of the word *Liberal* – of the greatest power – very much the first man in the House of Commons'.²³² Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone on 21 October: 'I cannot help expressing to you my deep sorrow at the death of Sir James Graham...it seems to leave *you* so bare, and I know how much, from your long partnership in office and in opposition with him, you will feel it'.²³³ Gladstone replied: 'I much feel his removal, quite apart from the immense value which I attached to his administrative knowledge and authority. The last twelve

²²⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.21.

²²⁸ Morley, Vol.2, p.88.

²²⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.23.

²³⁰ *GD*, Vol.6, 28 Nov.1861.

²³¹ *ODNB*. Parry, J., 'Sir James Robert George Graham, 2nd baronet (1792-1861)' (2008), pp.15. Politician. First Lord of the Admiralty 1830-4 & 1852-5, Home Secretary 1841-8.

²³² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.330.

²³³ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.21-2.

months have taken away my three closest political associates, and I am bare indeed...'²³⁴

The third political associate was Lord Aberdeen²³⁵, who had died at the end of 1860. Aberdeen had once expressed a perceptive and balanced judgement of the working of the mind of Gladstone to Wilberforce, who recorded the remarks in his diary on 7 August 1855:

Gladstone intends to be Prime Minister. He has great qualifications, but some serious defects. The chief, that when he has convinced himself, perhaps by abstract reasoning, of some view, he thinks everyone else ought at once to see it as he does, and can make no allowance for difference of opinion.²³⁶

2.4 The Friendship Matures

In April 1863 Gladstone was concerned about Samuel Wilberforce's health:

I am pained to see you carrying such marks of over work... You are very kind in advising me, but *you would advise much more yourself*. I cannot conceive greater improvidence than the way in which you sometimes seem to spend your strength without reckoning the stock on which you have to draw.²³⁷

Wilberforce heeded Gladstone's advice and three months later took a holiday in Switzerland.

In October 1863 Wilberforce confirmed the Gladstones' daughter at Hawarden 'in his own admirable way.' Gladstone continued in his diary: 'Much conversation with Bp on what might follow Ld Palmerston. He will have me hold for the first place: I say no'.²³⁸ Wilberforce's diary entry on this conversation was: 'Long talk

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.22.

²³⁵ *ODNB*. Chamberlain, M., 'Gordon, George Hamilton, fourth Earl of Aberdeen (1784-1860)' (2008), pp.21. Prime Minister and scholar. Peelite. Foreign and Colonial Secretary 1828-35, Foreign Secretary 1841-6, Prime Minister 1852-5.

²³⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.286.

²³⁷ Add. MS 44343, 26 April 1863.

²³⁸ *GD*, Vol.6, 20 Oct.1863.

with Gladstone as to Premiership, he for acting under John Russell!!!',²³⁹ This manifested lack of ambition on Gladstone's part is another of his contradictions.

During Samuel Wilberforce's next visit to Hawarden, in August 1864, there was much talk with Gladstone on the Court of Appeal, various church matters, the colonies and the moral condition of the standing army. After Wilberforce preached a sermon at the local choir festival ('a noble one from the Bp'.²⁴⁰), he and the Gladstone family decamped to Penmaenmawr on the North Wales coast, a popular retreat for Gladstone.²⁴¹ Wilberforce recorded in his diary that during a mountainous walk it was 'curious to see his strong mind so unbend'. Gladstone also showed a human weakness: 'His head easily giddy; cannot bear even the near approach to a precipice'.²⁴² Whilst at Hawarden, Wilberforce was subjected to Gladstonian singing evenings, Gladstone himself noting: 'Truly I am an old bird, and begin to crack in the upper region'.²⁴³ Lord Stanley²⁴⁴ recounted that in February 1864 Gladstone had stayed at the home of Lord Chesham and passed Sunday evening 'in singing hymns with his wife. The Bishop of Oxford, who was present, was reluctantly compelled to join but revenging himself afterwards by telling the story'.²⁴⁵

Samuel Wilberforce had a lifelong interest and extensive knowledge of natural history²⁴⁶, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1845. He was an expert horseman and enjoyed the outdoors. Gladstone's *penchant* for cutting down trees is well known, but he also enjoyed walking.²⁴⁷ He and Wilberforce had many long hikes

²³⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.92.

²⁴⁰ *GD*, Vol.6, 21 Aug.1864.

²⁴¹ *GD*, Vol.6, 23-31 Aug.1864.

²⁴² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.148.

²⁴³ *GD*, Vol.6, 24 Aug.1864.

²⁴⁴ *ODNB*. Steele, D., 'Stanley, Edward Henry, fifteenth Earl of Derby (1826-1893)' (2008), pp.11. Politician and diarist. Progressive, 'liberal' Tory. Colonial Secretary 1858-9, 1882-1885, first Secretary of State for India in 1858, Foreign Secretary 1882-1885.

²⁴⁵ Shannon, Vol.1, p.533.

²⁴⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.168, 243-4.

²⁴⁷ Morley, Vol.1, p.116.

together from Hawarden. Gladstone read and wrote extensively on a wide range of subjects. He was a keen classic scholar, translated Horace's *Odes* and had a profound knowledge of Homeric poems.²⁴⁸

While Gladstone's relations with the emerging Liberal party were straightforward on the principle of free trade, they were less easy on a wide range of other issues in the 1860s. Even his proposals as Chancellor were quite often challenged and defeated. Wilberforce, writing to Gladstone on the opponents in his own party, considered that 'While they ought to judge you on your whole course of action, examined truthfully and philosophically, *many* of them *cannot* do this.' He advised: 'That...in condescension to their weakness you ought to take advantage of some of the many occasions in which you disagree with them to speak, as only you can speak, so that each man amongst them shall see his own poor thoughts clarified and feel that you are indeed his own highest mouthpiece of his own deficient conviction'.²⁴⁹

At the general election of 1865, Gladstone was defeated at Oxford University, a seat he had held for eighteen years. This defeat was due to a variety of factors, including Gladstone's views on education, the predominantly Tory support within the University and new legislation which allowed non-resident M.A.s to have a postal vote.²⁵⁰ Wilberforce was quick to commiserate with Gladstone, writing on 18 July:

I cannot forbear expressing to you my grief and indignation at the result...Everything I could with propriety do I did heartily, to save our University this great loss and dishonour, as well as a loving honour of you. They [the Oxford electorate]...have inflicted on the University and the Church the gross indignity of rejecting the best, noblest, and truest son of each...You were too great for them.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Matthew, p.581.

²⁴⁹ Add. MS 44344, 7 May 1863.

²⁵⁰ Morley, Vol.2, pp.144-5.

²⁵¹ Add. MS 44345, 18 July 1865.

Gladstone's reply showed his appreciation in a letter three days later: 'I do not doubt that this to me great event is all for good, and the consolation of cordial support, indulgent judgement, and warm affection are given me in abundance – in more than abundance by you...I thank you for bearing with my waywardness, and manifesting, in the day of need, your confidence and attachment.' Gladstone had experienced 'two great deaths'. The first had been his breaking with the Conservative party; the second, had been the breaking of his tie with Oxford. 'There will probably be a third, and no more'.²⁵²

Wilberforce replied on 24 July, urging Gladstone to seize the premiership and take a radical stance: 'Your charge is what Pitt's was, it is to make England wealthy, to diffuse that wealth specially among the working classes, to enlarge and purify our institutions.' Wilberforce wondered what Gladstone meant by the expression 'There will probably be a third and no more'.²⁵³ Gladstone's response on 28 July was curious in its self deprecation and pessimism:

The oracular sentence has little bearing on present affairs or prospects, and may stand in its proper darkness...the hortatory part of your letter, coming, as it does, from you, with such sincerity, such authority and such affection, I must not pass unnoticed. I think that if you had the same means of estimating my position, jointly with my faculties, as I have, you would be of a different opinion. It is my fixed determination never to take any step whatever to raise myself to a higher level in official life...on the double ground, first, of my total ignorance of my capacity, bodily or mental, to hold such a higher level; and secondly – perhaps I might say especially – because I am certain that the fact of my seeking it would seal my doom in taking it.²⁵⁴

Philip Magnus considered that the mood of depression after the emotional strain through which Gladstone had passed, had made him consider retiring from politics

²⁵² Add. MS 44345, 21 July 1865.

²⁵³ Add. MS 44345, 24 July 1865.

²⁵⁴ Add. MS 44345, 28 July 1865.

and devoting the rest of his life to religion.²⁵⁵ Wilberforce wrote to Arthur Gordon on 12 March 1866 after Gladstone's first appearance as Leader of the House of Commons: 'Gladstone has risen entirely to his position, and done all his most sanguine friends hoped for as leader...There is a general feeling of the insecurity of the Ministry and the Reform Bill [to increase the franchise] to be launched tonight is thought a bad rock'.²⁵⁶ On 18 June 1866, he considered that while Gladstone was determined to force through the Reform Bill, 'many of his colleagues would defer to it'.²⁵⁷

Following many amendments and a mauling from the Conservative opposition, led by Disraeli, the government eventually lost a vote and the cabinet resigned on 19 June. Disraeli became prime minister. On 18 August 1867, Wilberforce wrote to Arthur Gordon: 'The most wonderful thing is the rise of Disraeli...He has been able to teach the House of Commons almost to ignore Gladstone; and at present lords it over him, and, I am told, says that he will hold him down for twenty years'.²⁵⁸

On 28 October 1868 Archbishop Longley of Canterbury died. The Queen's favoured candidate, Bishop Tait of London²⁵⁹ won the day against Disraeli's unsatisfactory nominations. Tait, as a Broad Churchman and Liberal, was unacceptable to Disraeli on both theological and political grounds.²⁶⁰

The debate moved to who should be appointed to the diocese of London in Tait's place. Wilberforce's credentials seemed strong, but he was not appointed because Disraeli believed that public opinion throughout the country would resent Wilberforce's appointment, and this would be reflected in the forthcoming general

²⁵⁵ Magnus, p.174.

²⁵⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.182.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.182.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.227.

²⁵⁹ Buckle, G. E., ed. *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series (London, 1926), Vol.1 pp.541-4.

²⁶⁰ Money Penny, W.F. & Buckle, G.E., *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli* (5 vols., London, 1910-20), Vol.5, pp.69-70.

election. Both Wilberforce's son, Reginald,²⁶¹ and Disraeli's biographer, hint darkly that others were working on Disraeli's fears.²⁶² Samuel Wilberforce was erroneously thought in some quarters to be an ultra High Churchman with Romish leanings. Some of this was because a large number of his family had become Roman Catholics. 'No Popery' was definitely in the air. Disraeli commented, after the latest conversion in 1868: 'How could I? His daughter by some strange malignity turned Papist just at that moment. The father's appointment [to the diocese of London] would probably have cost me several seats at the general election'.²⁶³

Disraeli's close political ally, Lord Derby, recommended Wilberforce's appointment to London.²⁶⁴ Disraeli replied on 12 November: 'The Bishop of Oxford is quite out of the running, so great is the distrust of him by the country. This is the great fact, that has come out of the canvass of England'.²⁶⁵ Buckle summarised Disraeli's currently held view of Wilberforce that he 'did not trust one who had been hand in glove with Gladstone; and he was convinced that the great mass of his countrymen distrusted him still more'.²⁶⁶ Eventually the bishopric of London was granted to the colourless Bishop Jackson of Lincoln.

In the meantime Gladstone had turned his attention to the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, and Wilberforce at least had the satisfaction of seeing that Disraeli's plan to retain power despite having a minority government, by stirring up what he saw as Evangelical and Nonconformist resentments, came to nought. It is interesting to speculate if Archbishop Longley's death had been delayed by six weeks

²⁶¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.268.

²⁶² Monypenny & Buckle, Vol.5, p.71.

²⁶³ Add. MS 48662, Sir Edward Hamilton's diary, 11 Jan 1894.

²⁶⁴ Monypenny & Buckle, Vol.5, pp. 68-9.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.5, p.69.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.5, p. 58.

whether Gladstone would have appointed Samuel Wilberforce to either of the vacancies in London or Canterbury.

After the general election of November 1868 Gladstone was asked by the Queen on 1 December to form a government. He and Wilberforce met on 11 December at Hatfield, as guests of Lord Salisbury.²⁶⁷ The following day Samuel Wilberforce wrote to his son Ernest:

[Gladstone] is so delightfully true and the same; just as full of interest in every good thing of every kind....When people talk of Gladstone going mad, they do not take into account the wonderful elasticity of his mind and the variety of his interests. This morning...[we] had a walk around this beautiful park, and he was just as much interested in the size of the oaks, their probable age &c., as if no care of state ever pressed upon him. This is his safeguard, joined to entire rectitude of purpose and clearness of view.²⁶⁸

Gladstone's diary entry on 11 December was more succinct: 'Conversation with Bishop of Oxford on the Church appointments: he is ag[ains]t D[Israeli]'.²⁶⁹

2.5 The Final Years

In 1869 Gladstone offered Samuel Wilberforce advancement to the venerable bishopric of Winchester which had fallen vacant when the ailing incumbent, Charles Sumner, announced his retirement. Wilberforce recorded in his diary on 15 September 1869: 'Heard from W.E.G. Most kind letter. "Time come for him to seal the general verdict," and ask if he might name me to Queen for Winchester'.²⁷⁰ In this letter, Gladstone reminded Wilberforce that people did not always take kindly to his sort of personal banter: 'You must at one or more times have made observations

²⁶⁷ ODNB. *Smith, P.*, 'Cecil, Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoigne, third Marquess of Salisbury (1830-1903)' (2009), pp.22. Secretary of State for India 1874-8, Foreign Secretary 1876-80 & 1887-92, Tory party leader 1880-4, Prime Minister 1886-92 & 1895-1900.

²⁶⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.271-2.

²⁶⁹ *GD*, Vol.7, 11 Dec.1868.

²⁷⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.304.

on persons, perhaps playfully, which have been taken as if they indicated a habit of too full censures or remarks. You will know whether this suggestion can be turned to any account'.²⁷¹ Wilberforce accepted Gladstone's offer 'with many feelings of thankfulness that it comes from your hands...It costs me almost more than I can express to leave the Diocese.'²⁷² The official letter from Gladstone to Wilberforce, stating that he should be translated from Oxford to Winchester with the sanction of the Queen followed on 28 September. Gladstone added:

I shall watch with a profound interest the girding up of such energies as yours for the great work which...your diocese will open to you; and that, with regard to those incidental attributes of your position which belong to the mixed sphere of religion and the *saeculum*, I shall not scruple to avail myself upon occasion of the privileges of an old friendship, thoroughly cemented by the difficulties of these arduous times, to submit any representation that may be prompted by my point of view to your independent judgement.²⁷³

The diocese of Winchester was vast, extending from the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight and the South Coast northwards to include South London. It needed reorganisation. Writing to Lord Granville²⁷⁴ in August 1869, Gladstone predicted that there might be difficult times ahead: 'The prominence of S.O. on the canvas will lead to his [Wilberforce] being much more microscopically than good naturedly examined and criticised'.²⁷⁵ Granville feared the appointment would not be well received in Surrey.²⁷⁶ Some considered that Gladstone was repaying a political debt to Wilberforce. When a clergyman in the diocese of Oxford asked if this rumour had any foundation, Wilberforce replied:

²⁷¹ *BD*, II K, 12 Sept. 1869.

²⁷² Add. MS 44345, 15 Sept. 1869.

²⁷³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.307.

²⁷⁴ *ODNB*. Chamberlain, M.E., 'Gower, Granville George Leveson-, second Earl Granville (1815-1891)' (2008), pp.15. Politician. Colonial Secretary 1868-70, Foreign Secretary 1870-74 & 1880-5.

²⁷⁵ Ramm A., ed. *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville* (London, 1952), p. 47.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.50.

The class of minds who indulge in these base suspicions may perhaps be considering that, in making the change, I undertake (1) harder work; (2) during the life of the present Bishop a smaller income; (3) far greater expenses; (4) the love and affection of 24 year's growth...I am ashamed for those who ask it at giving such explanations.²⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Wilberforce had written to Gladstone that: 'It seems a hard though necessary prudence' which led him to decline a visit to Hawarden that autumn.²⁷⁸

On 6 October Gladstone wrote to the editor of *The Times*, which had printed an accusation that Wilberforce was moving to Winchester for financial gain. This was far from the truth, because his expenditure would now be considerable. Gladstone requested that the editor inserted in the newspaper a paragraph that Gladstone had written and which was duly published.²⁷⁹ Gladstone wrote in his diary that [Wilberforce] 'moves certainly not for lucre, but more from pluck and for power'.²⁸⁰

When in 1882 Reginald Wilberforce was writing the third volume of his father's *Life* he enquired of Gladstone the circumstances of the appointment to Winchester, particularly if it was a bribe for Samuel's apparently changed opinion on the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Gladstone responded:

My memory does not record any single instance in which your father's advancement to Winchester was associated even by the most censorious of men with political subserviency. It was a very small acknowledgement of his vast services to the Church of England, given when greater ones had been, as I think, unhappily withheld. Undoubtedly he gave me a warm personal support, and probably suffered for it...but with his politics generally I was far from satisfied.²⁸¹

A valedictory address was presented to Samuel Wilberforce from the clergy of the Oxford diocese on 11 November 1869. The clergy expressed their sorrow and

²⁷⁷ BL, I C200, Letter to Rev. H. Majendie, 13 Oct. 1869.

²⁷⁸ Add. MS 44345, 30 Sept. 1869.

²⁷⁹ *The Times*, 8 October 1869, p.7a.

²⁸⁰ *GD*, Vol.7, 6 Oct. 1869.

²⁸¹ BL, I. C200, 6 July 1882.

regret at his departure, acknowledging Wilberforce's achievements within the diocese as well as the sympathy and wise counsel he had shown to them at a personal level.²⁸² Gladstone added a fulsome postscript to this event in a letter to Wilberforce on 20 November:

I have seldom read anything with more pleasure or more emotion than the address to you from the clergy of your now vanishing diocese... You have not known me as a flatterer, and so I the more freely say it makes the heart bound to feel that even in this poor world truth and justice sometimes claim their own, and thank God it has not been in the power of jealousy or cowardice, or spite, 'or any other' evil creature to detract one jot from the glory of that truly great episcopate, the records of which you have written alike in the visible outward history of the Church and in the fleshy tablets of the hearts of men... I wish I had been an Oxford clergyman qualified to sign [the address].²⁸³

Wilberforce replied to Gladstone on 30 November: 'Your words made my heart warm... I trust indeed that my physical strength may suffice for the work before me.' Wilberforce reminded Gladstone that 'It is *not the* post for which, after so many years of labour and gathered experience, I should have chosen to leave Oxford'.²⁸⁴ He had previously aspired to being Archbishop of either Canterbury or York, and would have settled for the Bishopric of London.²⁸⁵

Wilberforce threw himself into the work of his new and massive diocese. New churches were built for the rapidly growing population of Surrey and Hampshire. There were over a thousand clergymen in the diocese, some of whom had been allowed to exercise extreme Ritualistic or Evangelical practices because of the laxness of the previous bishop.²⁸⁶ He also continued as a member of the Ritual Commission. A committee of Convocation undertook to produce a revised version of

²⁸² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.314-5.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.316-7.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.317.

²⁸⁵ Edwards, p.339.

²⁸⁶ Meacham, pp.299-301.

the Bible, with Wilberforce as its chairman. He liaised with Gladstone to ensure that this work fell within the remit of Convocation and was not carried out by a Royal Commission, which would have been the wish of Lord Shaftesbury and some other parliamentarians.²⁸⁷

In February 1870, Wilberforce confirmed Gladstone's son Herbert at St. John's Church, Brixton. Wilberforce and Gladstone continued to correspond and discuss many issues of the day, including education, the Irish Land Bill and the Court of Appeal.

Another issue which came to a head in the early 1870s concerned the Athanasian Creed. In the wording of the Creed nonbelievers were consigned forever to hell, which many regarded as being unnecessarily severe. This initially came within the ambit of the Ritual Commission, who passed the controversy onto Convocation. High Churchmen opposed any change in the Creed, while Broad Churchmen sought an alternative. Archbishop Tait pressed for reform. Gladstone wrote to Wilberforce that 'alarming rumours had reached me about movements against the Athanasian Creed and their probable consequences'.²⁸⁸ Wilberforce replied that he had convinced the Archbishop that he 'must for the present drop the Athanasian creed attempt'.²⁸⁹ Tait then proposed a discussion on the Creed in Convocation. Wilberforce had always favoured retention of the Creed, along with an explanatory note softening the literal meaning of the words.²⁹⁰ Eventually a compromise was reached with a statement which did not offend Broad or High Churchmen. Gladstone and Wilberforce discussed the matter at what was the Bishop's last visit to Hawarden in September

²⁸⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.348-50.

²⁸⁸ *GD*, Vol.7, 11 March 1872.

²⁸⁹ Add. MS 44345, 13 March 1872.

²⁹⁰ *Chronicles of Convocation*, 3 May 1872, p.542.

1872.²⁹¹ Wilberforce recorded in his diary that Gladstone was ‘for no violence; would keep all possible’, while suspecting that it was ‘only a preliminary attack on the Prayer Book’.²⁹²

In January 1873, Wilberforce invited Gladstone to participate in a meeting ‘to Evangelize South London’.²⁹³ Gladstone declined the invitation:

It is not that I have any doubt of the expediency or the urgency of your plan, or any slackness of good will towards it. But I have taken a very marked step by the recent Address at Liverpool; and were I rapidly to *cumulate* similar manifestations I should...weaken my general means of doing good. A good deal of gall seems to have been stirred already, & any fresh manifestation of the ‘‘clerical’’ mind with which I understand the P[all] M[agazine] Gazette credits me must I think be postponed.²⁹⁴

Perhaps Gladstone the politician suspected that he risked losing some of his authority and broad appeal by appearing on an evangelizing platform, or maybe he was just too busy.

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Samuel Wilberforce, despite his unrelenting activity, was not a well man. In 1870 he had two heart attacks. The second, in November, he describes as being ‘In night seized with violent spasms of the heart’. At one stage he became pulseless and pale, but responded to sal volatile administered by his son Reginald.²⁹⁵ This episode has the features of a Stokes-Adams attack, or cardiac syncope, which results from a temporary cessation or severely dysfunctional beating of the heart. In April 1871 he was seized with what he described as ‘palpitations or rather spasms of heart’.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, he kept up the pace for two more years. In April 1873 he admitted to

²⁹¹ *GD*, Vol.7, 3 Sept.1872.

²⁹² *BL*, I, C199, 19 Oct. 1871.

²⁹³ *Add. MS* 44345, 6 Jan.1873.

²⁹⁴ *GD*, Vol.7, 9 Jan.1873.

²⁹⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.368.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.378.

his son Ernest: ‘I am well, but very much tired, and should like to go to sleep for a week or a fortnight’.²⁹⁷

After a dinner party on 6 May 1873 Wilberforce recorded in his diary: ‘Gladstone much talking how little real good work any Premier has done after 60...I told him Dr Clarke [Gladstone’s physician] thought it would be physically worse for him to retire’, to which Gladstone replied ‘Dr. Clarke does not know how completely I should employ myself’.²⁹⁸

The last time that Gladstone saw Samuel Wilberforce alive was on 3 July 1873,²⁹⁹ although they continued to correspond around that time on the exclusion of the spiritual element from the Supreme Court of Appeal as an addition to the Judicature Act which was passing through Parliament.³⁰⁰

On Saturday 19 July 1873, Gladstone had gone to Holmbury, near Dorking, to stay with Edward Leveson-Gower, the brother of Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary. They were to be joined by Samuel Wilberforce and Lord Granville, who were riding from Leatherhead station. Lord Granville has described how, when he was riding slightly ahead of Wilberforce, he heard a thud and saw the bishop lying on the ground. Samuel Wilberforce was dead.³⁰¹ The body was taken to a nearby house, Abinger Hall.

Gladstone recorded in his diary how, while he was waiting at Holmbury, the groom had arrived with the message that the Bishop had had a bad fall. ‘An hour & a half later G[ranville] entered pale and said: “It’s all over”’. In an instant the thread of that very precious life was snapped. We were all in deep and silent grief’.³⁰² The

²⁹⁷ BL, I. C205, Easter Day 1873.

²⁹⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p 413.

²⁹⁹ *GD*, Vol.7, 3 July 1873.

³⁰⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol. 3, pp.417-8.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* Vol. 3, pp.424-5.

³⁰² *GD*, Vol.7, 19 July 1873.

following day, Gladstone ‘woke with a sad sense of a great void in the world’.³⁰³ Reginald Wilberforce has described how Gladstone, kneeling beside Samuel Wilberforce’s body on the following Monday, was sobbing. Gladstone described in his diary how he ‘saw *Him* for the last time in the flesh: resting from his labours. Attended the inquest. Inspected the spot: all this cannot be forgotten’.³⁰⁴

The Morning Post, in its obituary, gave a balanced retrospective assessment of Samuel Wilberforce’s personality:

With all his brilliant and varied attainments [he] was not one of the most consistent of characters; but his very inconsistencies arose mainly from his large hearted kindness and sympathy, and his wish to think the best of all and of each person with whom he was brought into contact...He was by nature and constitution tolerant and liberal, and held it as an axiom that truth, though one in itself, is yet many-sided...Hence his wish to become, in the right and best sense of the words, ‘all things to all men’.³⁰⁵

The Times alluded to his him being, in the best sense, ‘a many sided man’ into whose career many careers were crowded together. ‘Whatever he undertook, he did with grace and ease...with a heartiness which proved contagious. As well as being ‘most popular in society and beloved by his clergy, except the extreme men of either side or party’, as an orator he had ‘rarely been equalled’. In diocesan management he showed administrative ability and energy ‘which does not often display itself on the Episcopal bench’.³⁰⁶

Writing to the Queen on 23 July, Gladstone believed ‘that there can be no doubt that there does not live the man...who has, by his own indefatigable and unmeasured

³⁰³ *GD*, Vol.7, 20 July 1873.

³⁰⁴ *GD*, Vol.7, 21 July 1873.

³⁰⁵ *The Morning Post*, 21 July 1873, p.6.

³⁰⁶ *The Times*, 21 July 1873, p.10.

labours, given such a powerful impulse as the Bishop of Winchester gave to the religious life of the country'.³⁰⁷

Gladstone gave a eulogy on his old friend at the inauguration of the Wilberforce Memorial Fund on 3 December 1873.³⁰⁸ He thought the most remarkable characteristic of Bishop Wilberforce was that while, to a degree surpassing every other man, his time and his mind were apparently absorbed in the great concerns of his diocese and the Church at large...he...seemed to retain a close, intimate, and detailed knowledge of all that was happening in the circles of private life to everyone whom he knew.'

Gladstone alluded to Wilberforce's Episcopal work:

The name and character of Bishop Wilberforce ever must stand high among the whole army of diocesan Bishops, not of this country only, but of the whole Christian world, and not of this generation only, but also of the generations that have preceded it...I say that he was the Bishop, not of a particular Church, not of a particular diocese, but of the nation to which he belonged.³⁰⁹

Roy Jenkins argued that the death of Samuel Wilberforce provides an extraordinary vignette of Victorian life: 'The country's most eminent bishop had been killed on a Saturday evening riding up a country lane from a railway station with the Foreign Secretary to dine with the Prime Minister'.³¹⁰

As to the cause of Wilberforce's death, while it is generally attributed directly to impact on the ground following a fall from the horse, a fatal heart attack is a strong possibility in the light of Wilberforce's cardiac history. This is consistent with the comments by a reporter from *The Standard* who inspected the site of death: 'Looking

³⁰⁷Lathbury, Vol.2, p.308.

³⁰⁸ A large sum of money was raised. The aim was to build 'Wilberforce House' to evangelise South London. Unfortunately this was not achieved due to a lack of organisation, although numerous small memorials were erected throughout the Oxford and Winchester dioceses: Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.433.

³⁰⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.435-6.

³¹⁰ Jenkins, pp.372-3 fn.

at the place it is difficult to conceive how any animal could have fallen there had the rider taken the most ordinary precautions, and the calamity is the more incomprehensible that the deceased had an excellent seat...and the horse had been picked for its surefootedness'.³¹¹ Although it was concluded at the inquest, without an autopsy, that death was instantaneous from dislocation of the neck, there were no external marks or injuries.³¹²

2.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that from the early 1840s, when both were attaining national prominence, a friendship developed between Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone. Often working in unison, they strove to strengthen and protect the Anglican Church from divisions within it as well as external threats which included Dissent and Roman Catholicism. Wilberforce had ambitions to become an archbishop. Only in 1869, as Prime Minister, was Gladstone's covert patronage able to move Wilberforce from his Oxford bishopric to the more prestigious post of Bishop of Winchester, four years before Wilberforce's sudden death in 1873.

³¹¹ *The Standard*, 22 July 1873.

³¹² *The Times*, p.8, 23 July 1873.

PART TWO

THE PUBLIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE AND SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS ISSUES

CHAPTER THREE

CONFLICTS AND DIVISIONS WITHIN THE EARLY VICTORIAN CHURCH

3.1 Introduction

The early Victorian period was an age of innovation and experiment, during which great changes were wrought upon both the physical and political face of Britain. However, the change was even greater to the intellectual landscape of the country. A crisis of religious faith and a confidence in the possibilities of science opened up exciting lines of enquiry and troubling avenues of doubt. The religious census of 1851 presented further cause for concern by showing that almost half of the population did not attend any type of church. During the early nineteenth century the Church of England had attempted to keep pace with the growth and urban shift of the population by providing more clergy and building more churches. However, the Established Church of England had lost its monopoly, for nearly half of those who did attend church were Dissenters (Nonconformists).

The Established Church was riven by doctrinal differences. It was a church divided against itself, unable to unite in order to effect reforms in important issues. In the early part of the nineteenth century there were two main factions within the Church of England, the High and the Low or Evangelical Churches, with differing perceptions of Christianity. Both High and Low Churchmen were seeking for authority: the High Church within the Church itself, the Low Church in the Scriptures.³¹³ In the 1830s, the Oxford Movement, whose adherents were known as Tractarians, sprang into existence as an offshoot of the High Church, urging the

³¹³ Crowther M.A., *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Newton Abbot, 1970), p.19.

Church of England to rediscover its Catholic heritage and proclaiming the doctrine of Apostolic succession. In the 1840s and 1850s, a second generation of Tractarians became Ritualists. The Broad Church also emerged in the early 1850s, claiming that the only authority lay in private judgement and in the individual conscience, which alone could interpret the Scriptures at a time when Darwinism and other scientific discoveries subsequently brought into doubt the veracity of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. To add further confusion, some clergy and churches practiced an amalgam of the tenets from these different factions.

Much needed reform within the clergy, with nepotism, sinecures, pluralities and non-residence being frequent abuses, were gradually corrected by the Ecclesiastical Commission which was set up in 1835 and consisted of responsible clergymen who proposed reforms to the government. The lot of the parish clergy was improved by Acts of Parliament in the 1830s. Some bishops were criticised for abusing their powers, amassing large incomes and neglecting their dioceses. A readjustment of Episcopal salaries was made by Act of Parliament in 1836. Victorian bishops generally became more pastoral and committed to diocesan work. In 1860 the Church of England, in order to assert some measure of independence from the state and to have a forum for bringing together the various factions, re-established Convocation. Finally, with the growth of the Empire, the expansion of missionary activities and the establishment of a formal diocesan and clerical structure within the colonies became an imperative, although even this caused conflict within the Church.

Both Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone took a gloomy view of the early 1830s, at a time when reform was in the air. Wilberforce wrote from Brighthelmston to a friend in 1831:

With an infidel press, an ungodly people, and a scorning Parliament which knows not, nor will hear, the voice of truth as a matter of ridicule, I cannot see

how we can expect anything but distress...I see on every side the visible threatenings of Providence; a discontented people, one class pressing upon another, and all at war between themselves; an assaulted Church ill defended...³¹⁴

In similar vein, Gladstone described the Church at this time as

dishonouring to Christianity, disgraceful to the nation; disgraceful most of all to that much vaunted religious sentiment of the British public, which in impenetrable somnolence, endured and resented all interference with it.³¹⁵

This chapter explores these complex and inter-related issues, together with the reactions and responses of Wilberforce and Gladstone to them.

3.2 Divisions within the Church of England

Evangelicalism

The Evangelical or Low Church movement began in the 1730s.³¹⁶ In essence, Evangelicals placed primary emphasis on the salvation of individual souls. The central message of Sin, Salvation and Atonement was coupled with the simple view that the Bible was God's revelation written down by men acting under the direct guidance of divine inspiration. The Bible was therefore accepted as being true in a literal sense, although Evangelical theology began to crumble when rational criticism questioned the truth of the Bible in the late nineteenth century.³¹⁷ Traditionally, Evangelicals had put the teaching of the Scriptures before the organisation of the Church and considered personal devotion to be more important than priestly mediation. The Evangelicals, with old William Wilberforce as their great exemplar,

³¹⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.59.

³¹⁵ Gladstone, W.E., *Gleanings of Past Years* (London, 1879), Vol.6, pp.118-9.

³¹⁶ Bebbington, D.W., 'Gladstone and the Nonconformists: A Religious Affinity in Politics', in *Church, Society and Politics*, ed. D.Baker, *Studies in Church History*, Vol.12 (Oxford, 1975), pp.369-82.

³¹⁷ Helmstadter, R.J., 'The Nonconformist Conscience', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, Vol.5 *Interpretations*, ed. G. Parsons (Manchester, 1988), p.69.

promoted social causes.³¹⁸ They were also active in overseas and inner city missionary work.

The apogee of Evangelicalism was in the 1860s. Evangelicals generally benefited from the relationship between Church and State, receiving for instance a favourable outcome in the Gorham Judgement (see Chapter 4). Their political disinterest appealed to Palmerston who appointed several Evangelicals to the bench of bishops in 1855-60 following the advice of his step daughter's husband, the leading Evangelical and reformer Lord Shaftesbury.³¹⁹ By 1860, sixteen of the twenty-seven bishops had Evangelical leanings.³²⁰ Evangelicals were more interested in pastoral work than in the revival of Convocation, diocesan synods or gatherings of bishops. Evangelicalism, with its narrow approach and dependence upon the premise that man could best discover God by himself, gradually lost this personal focus when the mass appeal of Evangelicalism led to increasingly large congregations. In the words of Boyd Hilton: 'The Evangelical creed foundered on the Impregnable Rock of the Holy Scripture, but it was also becalmed by an increasingly genteel sensibility'.³²¹ Evangelicals pursued the tenet that 'self-help' was the means to salvation, both spiritually and economically, the latter leading to their temporal beliefs in *laissez-faire* and Free Trade.³²² Anglican Evangelicals united with Nonconformists to form the Evangelical Alliance in the mid 1840s as a counter to rationalism and what it saw as 'popery', whether of the Roman or Tractarian variety, and later Ritualism.³²³

³¹⁸ Crowther, p.22.

³¹⁹ ODNB. Wolfe, J., 'Anthony Ashley-Cooper, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885)' (2006), pp.9. Philanthropist and politician. Evangelical political crusader.

³²⁰ Crowther, p.22.

³²¹ Hilton, B., *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1986), p.5.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.16.

³²³ See for example, Wolfe, J., *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991), *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945* (London, 1994), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1990* (London, 1995).

Samuel Wilberforce and his Tractarian brother Robert received opprobrium from Evangelicals in 1838 because their biography of William Wilberforce contained evidence that their father's simple faith was compatible with toleration of other doctrines.³²⁴ An Evangelical newspaper, *The Record*, conducted a witch hunt against Samuel Wilberforce.³²⁵ In 1853 its editor accused him of having 'popish tendencies' and claimed that Wilberforce's belief in Baptismal Regeneration was 'the very essence...of Popery,' that he had 'mistaken the only true way of salvation' and was 'leading others into the false way pursued by [him]self'. Wilberforce retorted that the editor's doctrine was that of the Puritans and that his own was that of the Church of England.³²⁶ Wilberforce in responding to accusations of Romish practices in the theological college at Cuddesdon wrote: 'Do you not suppose I am so blind as not to see perfectly that I might have headed the Evangelical body and be seated by them at Lambeth'.³²⁷ This remark also reflected where his ambition lay. Wilberforce criticised the Evangelicals' acceptance that the individual could easily reach up to God as a 'self-idolising tendency'.³²⁸ He also criticised Evangelicals who refused to partake of the Eucharist because its liturgy led to a repressive formalism.³²⁹

Gladstone presented a similar view in 1894 when he described how he had concluded in 1832 that there was an incompleteness to Evangelicalism which led him away from it:

The Evangelical clergy were the heralds of a real and profound revival...of spiritual life. Every Christian under their scheme had personal dealings with his God and Saviour...The service was inestimable but it was incomplete...there was no corresponding recognition of the Divine kingdom [or] of the perpetual,

³²⁴ Meacham, p.63.

³²⁵ Crowther, p.23.

³²⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.222-4.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p. 360.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.113.

³²⁹ S.Wilberforce, *Eucharista: Meditations and Prayers with Select Passages on the Most Holy Eucharist from old English Divines* (London, 1839), pp.x-xi.

indestructible existence of the Church of God. And yet the whole framework of Scripture...testified to the indestructible union between the collective and the individual life.

He then comments on his Evangelical background: 'I had been brought up with no notion of the Church as the Church or body of Christ'.³³⁰

When Gladstone appointed bishops in 1880-85, most of the vacancies went to Broad and High Churchmen. It was difficult to find suitable candidates in the Episcopal mix during his second administration because, in Gladstone's words, 'the Evang[elical] Party [is] now so barren'.³³¹

The High Church

The High Church party in the early years of the nineteenth century was characterised by a rigid orthodoxy based on the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. It strenuously asserted the rights of the Church of England as the national Church, was highly suspicious of any secular interference, generally opposed reform and had an intense dislike of Dissenters.³³² The emphasis on devotion was transmitted through appointed services. The cathedral style of service, with a robed choir and choral setting of the services also became the ideal for parish worship.³³³

High Churchmen, protesting against contemporary secularism, felt that the Church must make its voice heard through Convocation. Samuel Wilberforce, with his strong views on corporate worship, the importance of the sacraments and the need for Convocation could be categorised as a High churchman. He founded a theological college with the intention of preserving and disseminating sound doctrine within the Church.

³³⁰ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.7-8.

³³¹ *GD*, Vol.10, 5 Nov.1882.

³³² Neill, S., *Anglicanism* (London, 1958), p.232.

³³³ Parsons, G., 'Reform, Revival and Realignment: The Experience of Victorian Anglicanism' in *Religion in Victorian Britain :1 Traditions*, ed. G. Parsons (Manchester, 1988), p.49.

Adherence by High Church followers to the Book of Common Prayer included a belief in baptismal regeneration, which ran contrary to the Evangelical belief that self-conscious conversion was necessary to become a Christian. As was seen in Chapter 1, this difference caused Gladstone great heart searching as a young man. Later, as a High Churchman, participation in Holy Communion was at the heart of his devotional life.³³⁴ According to Gladstone, it was a closer examination of the Occasional Offices of the Prayer Book which opened his eyes.³³⁵ Gladstone later recalled that ‘it imparted to the framework of my Evangelical ideas a shock from which they never recovered. I found that in regard to the priesthood and to sacramental doctrine...we stood wholly apart from the general mass of Protestantism’.³³⁶

In the 1840s Gladstone formed with other High Churchmen a group called ‘the Enlightenment’ which undertook intensive religious devotion and charitable works. In Gladstone’s case this took him into social work among the prostitutes of London.

The Tractarian Movement

A group of Fellows of Oriel College formed a nexus of High Church opinion in the 1820s. The four principal members of the circle were John Keble, Edward Pusey, John Henry Newman and Hurrell Froude.³³⁷ While the old High Churchmen tended to look no further back than the Reformation, what came to be known as the Oxford Movement regarded the Church of England as part of the Catholic tradition as a

³³⁴ Bebbington (1993), p.225.

³³⁵ Russell, G.W.E., *Mr Gladstone’s Religious Development: a Paper Read in Christ Church, 5 May 1899* (London, 1899), p.17.

³³⁶ Add MS 44790, folios. 160-1, *Autobiographia*.

³³⁷ ODNB. Brendon, P., ‘(Richard) Hurrell Froude (1803-1836)’ (2004), pp.4. Church of England clergyman, Keble and Newman edited and published his writings as *Remains* in 1839, a controversial work widely denounced as Papist.

continuum from the Apostles and the early Church.³³⁸ As such, they regarded themselves not as Protestants but as Anglo-Catholics, faithful to the early and undivided church, while distancing themselves from the practices and particular principles of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1827 Keble published *The Christian Year*, a book of pious poems for Sundays and Holy Days in the Christian calendar, strongly in the Catholic tradition. On the strength of this book, Keble was appointed as Regius Professor of Poetry at Oxford. In July 1833 Keble delivered the annual Assize Sermon at Oxford. It is a matter of dispute as to whether the sermon was the start of the Oxford Movement, although it was in Newman's view.³³⁹ Keble's theme was 'National Apostasy' and the apostasy in question was the, to him, sacrilegious interference of the state in the affairs of the Irish Church via the Irish Temporalities Bill of 1833.³⁴⁰ The sermon struck a chord among High Churchmen concerned with the changing relationship between Church and State.

One month later, Froude and William Palmer³⁴¹, Newman and Keble agreed the principles of the new movement. First, they proclaimed the doctrine of apostolic succession, interpreted as a line coming down from the Apostles through the ordaining bishop. Second, it was sinful to voluntarily allow persons or bodies not members of the Church to interfere in spiritual matters. Third, it was desirable to make the Church more popular. Fourth, it was necessary to protest against all attempts to separate Church from State, while steadily contemplating and preparing for the possibility of disestablishment. Newman, a skilled journalist and publicist,

³³⁸ Nockles, P., 'Anglicanism "represented" or "misrepresented",' in *Victorian Churches and Churchmen: Essays presented to Vincent Alan McClelland*, ed. S. Gilley (Woodbridge: 2005), pp.308-70.

³³⁹ Chadwick, O., *The Victorian Church, Part 1 1829-1859* (London, 1971) 3rd ed. p.70.

³⁴⁰ Parsons, p. 30.

³⁴¹ ODNB. Nockles, P.B., 'William Patrick Palmer (1803-1885)' (2004), pp.7, Church of England clergyman and theologian.

became the driving force in putting these views across to the clergy.³⁴² It was Newman who conceived the idea of *Tracts for the Times*, the aim of which was to inculcate the doctrine of apostolic succession, to revive more frequent communion and daily common prayer, to resist all attempts by the government to alter the Book of Common Prayer, and to instruct the people in misunderstood points of Anglican discipline and worship.³⁴³

Ninety tracts were published between 1833 and 1841. Newman wrote twenty-nine, Keble eight and Pusey seven. The tracts and their authors were heavily criticised for what were perceived as their Romish tendencies. Tract 90 in particular met with widespread opposition within the Anglican community because of Newman's interpretation of the Thirty Nine Articles. The articles were the charter of the Church of England, drawn up at the Reformation. Newman sought to define how far the articles, which were formulated in an uncatholic age, were not in conflict with the 'catholic' views which he held in 1842. Tract 90 analysed fourteen of the articles. Newman considered that no Catholic need hesitate to subscribe to the articles. This Catholic interpretation did not exclude a Roman Catholic interpretation in certain respects. He was not trying to reconcile the Church of England to the Church of Rome; in fact at the time he believed Rome to be in error.³⁴⁴ Oxford University declared that the suggested modes of interpretation of the *Tracts* evaded the sense of the articles and were therefore inconsistent with due observance of the statutes of the university.³⁴⁵ At that time acceptance of the articles was a requirement for entry into Oxford University. Liberal-minded clergy, although they disliked the *Tracts*, saw this criticism as an infringement on person liberty to state an opinion. *The Morning*

³⁴² Gilley, S., *Newman and his Age* (London, 1997), pp.111-24.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.72.

³⁴⁴ Chadwick, Part 1, p.183.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.185.

Chronicle wrote: ‘According to the authors of the *Tracts*, we are all good papists without knowing it’.³⁴⁶ For Newman, the tremendous uproar caused by Tract 90 was the beginning of the end. He retreated from Oxford and was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845.

Being an Oriel man, Samuel Wilberforce was well acquainted with the prime movers of Tractarianism. Many Tractarians, including Newman, had been raised in Evangelical households and all cherished the habit of private prayer. Wilberforce would have been sympathetic to this background and to the emphasis on reverence for the ecclesiastical traditions of the Church. In 1833, upon the occasion of Bishop Sumner’s Visitation to Brighstone, he preached a sermon supporting the doctrine of apostolic succession.³⁴⁷ In a letter to his mother in 1835, Wilberforce gave his views on Tractarianism:

In many things I do not agree with the few Oxford tracts I have read. But I do agree with all these great lights whom God has from time to time given to his Church...and with the primitive Church of the first three centuries.³⁴⁸

Wilberforce was critical of Newman having overstressed the difficulties of receiving God’s grace, which was only attained after ‘fear and trembling’. He considered that the harsh and demanding tenor in Newman’s preaching, and in the *Tracts*, was more likely to deter than inspire potential Christians.³⁴⁹ Another contentious and complex theological issue was Justification. Peter Nockles has given a comprehensive review of the history and different interpretations of the doctrine of Justification.³⁵⁰ Broadly, Roman Catholics believed that inherent or infused righteousness in man is attainable through obedience and good works, the emphasis

³⁴⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, 11 March 1841.

³⁴⁷ Meacham, p.65.

³⁴⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.90.

³⁴⁹ Meacham, p.85-6.

³⁵⁰ Nockles, P.B., *The Oxford Movement in Context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.256-69.

being on sanctification. Protestants from the time of the Reformation held that Justification equated with salvation through a faith in the indwelling spirit of God. While some High Churchman took a line on Justification that was close to the Roman Catholic and Tractarian view, Wilberforce interpreted Justification by Faith in the original Protestant sense. He was as critical of the Tractarians for combining Justification and sanctification, as were the Evangelicals. During an exchange of letters on Justification, Wilberforce refused to accept Newman's emphasis on sanctification.³⁵¹

A further point of conflict between Wilberforce and the Tractarians appeared in a letter to Charles Anderson in 1836: 'It is the view of Baptism which seems to me to be pushed too far. I mean the deadly state to which they picture sin after baptism to reduce men'.³⁵² This referred to the stern view of post-baptismal sin set forth by Pusey in Tract 67. Pusey declared that sin after baptism was 'not only a step towards impenitence, but weakens Baptismal grace, and tends to deprive the individual of the ordinary means of restoration'. Once having sinned, he argued, 'there remaineth no more such complete absolution in this life'.³⁵³ In 1838 two of Wilberforce's six University Sermons dealt directly with the doctrines set forth in Tract 67. In one sermon he stressed that while the moral consequences of sin were dreadful, there was hope for the truly penitent.³⁵⁴ In another sermon Wilberforce was certain that a baptised sinner, 'upon his turning unto the Lord,' would be assured of 'a full and free and ready pardon, even as before his baptism'.³⁵⁵ He despaired of the Tractarians' inclination to readmit sinners only conditionally.

³⁵¹ Quoted in Meacham, p.86.

³⁵² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.97.

³⁵³ Pusey, E.B., *Scriptural Views of Holy Baptism* (London, 1836), pp.38-9.

³⁵⁴ Wilberforce, S., *The Moral Consequences of Sin: Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford* (London, 1839), pp.6-7.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *The Penal Consequences of Sin*, pp.59-61.

Writing to his brother Robert in December 1841, Samuel Wilberforce expressed further misgivings:

The Tract men are threatening us with two great dangers: (1) Romanizing our best men of one tone; (2) driving into utter Low Church our best men of the other. I think it...especially needful, if we *do* hold really Church views, strongly to testify against their modification of them.³⁵⁶

In February 1842, Samuel expressed to Robert Wilberforce uncomfortable similarities between Tractarians and the Church of Rome:

The two leading errors [of Tractarianism] seem to me...to be (1) the *authority* as to teaching with which they invest the early Fathers, which implies the greater *purity* of celibacy, that fearful lie which has destroyed the sanctity of married life and polluted every female mind in Italy, to say nothing of other consequences; (2) their craving after a visible centre of unity, from the belief that the Church is to us instead of an absent Christ, instead of a means of His true presence.³⁵⁷

In summary, Samuel Wilberforce considered that the Tractarians' doctrine of insisting on an incredibly high standard of personal holiness for salvation caused them to doubt the more accessible promise of atonement, resulting in worship of the authority of the Church. This would lead them to the comfort zone provided by the certain reassurances of Rome.

Gladstone did not know Newman and Keble well, and had no personal knowledge of Froude. His knowledge of the Oxford Movement began only in 1839.³⁵⁸ Manning and Hope Scott, both Tractarians, were close friends of Gladstone in the 1830s and 1840s, when all three were devoted to Church principles.³⁵⁹ Writing to Hope Scott in February 1840, Gladstone considered that the Oxford Movement was a divisive group within the Anglican community. He felt that 'true Church

³⁵⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.207.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.213.

³⁵⁸ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.262.

³⁵⁹ Bebbington (1993), p.52.

principle utterly rejects the notion of party or combination standing between the individual and the Church' and that 'circumstances have within the last few years not only caused the writers at Oxford to be regarded as heads and members of a party...if there be such a party I am no member of it'.³⁶⁰

Gladstone was also highly critical of Newman's Tract 90. In a letter to Lord Lyttelton in 1841, while acknowledging the need for flexibility in interpreting the Thirty Nine Articles Gladstone considered that Newman in writing [Tract 90]

placed himself quite outside the Church of England in point of spirit and sympathy...he is right...that the authoritative documents of the Church of England were not meant to bind *all* men to every opinion of their authors, and particularly that they intended to deal as gently with prepossessions thought to look towards Rome as the necessity of securing a certain amount of reformation would allow...the terms in which Newman characterizes the present state of the Church of England...give both pain and alarm.³⁶¹

Writing to Manning in October 1843, Gladstone 'had heard before of his [Newman's] difficulties and his failures in keeping some of his followers from lapse into Romanism. How can one wonder at either when his own foundations are apparently so undermined?' He considered that 'Newman certainly has it in his power to contribute much to the religious disorganization of the country'.³⁶²

Gladstone is astonished that Newman 'does not see the English Church in her members to be growing more Catholic from year to year...Yet can he be aware how much more plain and undeniable the sway of Catholic principles has become in the Church of England, since the time *when he entertained no doubt about it?*'³⁶³

In 1843 the Oxford University authorities took measures against Tractarians. Hampden, the Professor of Divinity, tried but failed to keep a Tractarian candidate

³⁶⁰ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.232-3, 13 Feb.1840.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.233-4, 18 March 1841.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.281, 24 Oct.1843.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.282-3, 24 Oct.1843.

from a B.D. degree. Hampden himself had been recently censured for heterodoxy. Writing to Hope Scott, Gladstone was astonished 'that any body of sane men...intend that it is to be made a condition of communion or of Orders in the Church of England that the affirmative of Dr. Hampden's proposition on the subject of the Eucharist should be held'. He also doubted that 'the course to be taken in and by the University ...is of vital moment in its bearing upon the question, whether a policy of stern compression and repression is to be pursued on one hand, in conjunction with a policy of licence and laxity on the other'.³⁶⁴

In 1843 a vice-chancellor's court tried a charge of heterodoxy against a sermon by Pusey, considering it to contain highly sacramental language about the Real Presence, and suspended Pusey from preaching for two years. Pusey was refused a hearing, was not given the name of his accuser or particulars of the charge. Gladstone was one of those who signed a vigorous protest against the verdict and sentence.

Writing to Wilberforce in 1844, at the height of the Tractarian controversy, Gladstone opined that the Church preached one thing but practised another. 'In the pulpit she preaches on the assumption of the distinctions between right and wrong, sanctity and sin; but in the administration of ordinances, where she acts, we find only the faintest vestige of this distinction.' Gladstone appreciated that Wilberforce's straightforward approach to the relationship between Man and God was

the very opposite of the cold effete, and repressive temper in which at Oxford and elsewhere Oxford excesses are commonly opposed; and you do not allow that opposition, though you are very warm in it, to draw off the energy which should be spent upon the work of real development and improvement in the Church.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.302, 16 May 1844.

³⁶⁵ Add. MS 44343, 29 Dec.1841.

The Contest for the Oxford Professorship of Poetry.

When the Oxford Professorship of Poetry fell vacant in 1841, battle lines were drawn between the two candidates along partisan religious issues. Isaac Williams, a Tractarian, was supported by Pusey. His opponent was Edward Garbett, an Evangelical. Samuel Wilberforce was lobbied by his brother Robert and his old friend Sir George Prevost to vote for Williams. To Prevost, Samuel wrote on 26 November 1841:

I *had* hoped to vote *for* Isaac Williams; and felt sure that I need under no circumstances vote against him; for no mere interest in poetry, even if a fitter man appeared, could compel me to vote against old friendship. But Pusey's unhappy letter has quite altered the circumstances of the case. He has made it a distinct question of peculiar tenets...³⁶⁶

Gladstone intervened to defuse the confrontation, urging Wilberforce to support his proposition that both candidates should withdraw from the contest for the sake of church and university.³⁶⁷ Wilberforce refused to sign up to this proposal, although recognising that the arguments for it were 'evident and strong.' His reasons were: '(1) I have said that I shall vote for Garbett. (2) Is it not really giving a triumph to...one party for *both* now to be withdrawn?' It seemed likely that the majority would vote for Garbett'.³⁶⁸ In a subsequent letter to Gladstone, Wilberforce gave yet another reason for opposing Gladstone's proposal, the disapproval of his bishop: 'His opinion is so very strong against me doing so, that in the relation I stand to him, and being in some uncertainty myself, I feel hardly at liberty...to go counter to it'.³⁶⁹ Gladstone replied: 'I am sorely disappointed by your declining to sign. The fact that the day has come, when you are conscientiously restrained from lending a hand to a plan of

³⁶⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.205.

³⁶⁷ Add. MS 44343, 15 Dec.1841.

³⁶⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.207-8.

³⁶⁹ Add. MS 44343, 20 Dec.1841.

pacification in an hour of extreme need, is one among a hundred symptoms of the times that make the heart heavy.’ Gladstone then softened this blandishment: ‘At the same time I cannot fail to perceive that nothing can be more single and upright than your motives, nothing more kind than your manner of giving them expression.’³⁷⁰

Gladstone informed Wilberforce that 170 members had subscribed to his address concerning withdrawal of both candidates, including two bishops.³⁷¹ Williams eventually withdrew when he realised he had little hope of winning the election, and Garbett won by default.

The Censure of W. G. Ward

In 1844 W.G.Ward of Balliol College, a Tractarian who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, published a book entitled *The Ideal of a Christian Church Considered*. In the words of Owen Chadwick the book represented ‘a critical assault upon the practice of the Church of England when tested against the ideal of a Christian church; and that ideal...bore a singular likeness to the contemporary Church of Rome’.³⁷² Ward had written: ‘I know no single movement in the Church ...which seems to me so wholly destitute of all claims on our sympathy and regard as the English Reformation...We find – oh, most joyful, most wonderful...the whole cycle of Roman doctrine gradually possessing numbers of English Churchmen...’³⁷³

The Hebdomadal council, the governing body of Oxford University, was composed of the heads of colleges. If a measure needed the approval of the university, it required a vote of Convocation, which was composed of all senior members. The Hebdomadal council submitted three propositions to Convocation in February 1845. First, that Ward’s book was inconsistent with his declarations on

³⁷⁰ Add. MS 44343, 22 Dec.1841.

³⁷¹ Add. MS 44343, 29 Dec.1841.

³⁷² Chadwick, Part 1, p.207.

³⁷³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.245.

being admitted to the degrees of B.A. and M.A. Second, a proposition affirming that Ward was disentitled to the privileges of these degrees, and degrading him accordingly. The third proposition declared that the Thirty Nine Articles must henceforth be accepted in the sense intended by their original framers and now imposed by the university. But no one knew in what sense the university now imposed its subscription. The third proposition, which had been conceived 'under the excitement of panic in that it overshot its mark, and could scarcely be said to be intelligible',³⁷⁴ was deferred and eventually allowed to rest.

The first proposition was voted through on a two to one majority. Voting for the second proposition was much closer: 569 to 511. Samuel Wilberforce voted for condemnation of the book and the degradation of Ward. Gladstone voted against both these propositions; as did Robert Wilberforce, Manning, Pusey and Keble.

Gladstone, reviewing Ward's book in the *Quarterly Review*, stating that 'it ill became a priest of the English church so to speak of his own communion'.³⁷⁵ Writing to Wilberforce at the end of December 1844, Gladstone agreed with the college heads that Ward's propositions

are each and all of them deserving of censure. But then arises a serious question. If Ward is to be censured for what he has said of the Reformation, what is to be done with regard to other more prominent and dignified members of the University? For instance, Archbishop Whately [of Dublin] has written a book...for a purpose of proving...a doctrine which, I imagine to be, according to the law of the Church of England, heretical.

Gladstone cites further examples of others whose interpretation of the Articles is as untenable as that of Ward. He also considered that the third proposition would be 'a violent blow to the whole doctrine and practice of subscription [to the Thirty Nine

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.246.

³⁷⁵ Chadwick, Part 1, p.208.

Articles]; and that, if it be tenaciously adhered to, it will break down subscription altogether – in my view a very deplorable catastrophe’.³⁷⁶

Wilberforce, replying on 7 January 1845, could not accept Gladstone’s conclusions. ‘The amount of punishment *must* I think be regulated in part by other rules, and the mere sacredness of the matter with which the crime is concerned’.³⁷⁷ One week later Wilberforce wrote again to Gladstone, firmly stating his own position on Ward:

He [Ward] avows a “non-natural” sense as that in which he signs our Articles; declares his affection distinctly to the dogmatic teaching and practice of Rome in all points where Rome and England differ; and then challenges the University and the Church to punish him for so doing and holding.

The third proposition was ‘a bungling attempt indeed’. Wilberforce was pleased to report to Gladstone that the third proposition would not be presented to Convocation.³⁷⁸

Concluding the correspondence on this subject, Gladstone was concerned with the inconsistency of deprivation. The University and the Church would be placed in a false position

if in their judicial proceedings it is found that men may tamper with the Articles in relation to the Holy Trinity and the Offices of Our Lord and retain their degrees, while a man who sins upon the particular points at issue between Rome and the Church of England is to be deprived of his, at the instance of a Board of which that very man (*sic*) is an active member.³⁷⁹

While the condemnation of Ward and the secession of Newman to Rome in 1845 were blows to the Tractarian movement they did not mark its demise. The remaining

³⁷⁶ Add. MS 44467, 29 Dec. 1844.

³⁷⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol. 1, p. 255.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 256-7.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 257-8.

followers of the movement regrouped and Tractarianism began to make it itself felt at the parochial level.³⁸⁰

Bishop Forbes of Brechin

A Scotsman, Alexander Forbes³⁸¹ was an Oxford graduate who embraced Tractarianism through an acquaintance with Newman and Pusey. Forbes was appointed in 1857 to the diocese of Brechin, within the Scottish Episcopal Church. Rowan Strong claims that the support of Gladstone and Samuel Wilberforce aided Forbes's promotion to the bishopric.

Gladstone's interest in the Scottish Episcopal Church derived from the religion of his forebears. The Episcopal Chapel on his father's estate at Fasque lay within the diocese of Brechin. Perry Butler has maintained that Scottish Episcopalianism epitomised Gladstone's religious ideal, as a church 'High' in doctrine but without the ritualist excesses of Romish Anglo-Catholics³⁸² although, as Matthew pointed out, by the late 1840s Gladstone's reverence for the Eucharistic sacrament was devotionally and doctrinally more akin to the Tractarians.³⁸³

In his first Charge to his clergy in 1857, Forbes defended the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist.³⁸⁴ Gladstone and Wilberforce discussed Forbes's charge 'at length' in October 1857.³⁸⁵ The charge created intense division amongst Episcopalians as Forbes's Tractarian doctrine collided with traditional Episcopalian

³⁸⁰ Nockles, p.302.

³⁸¹ *ODNB*. Strong, R., 'Forbes, Alexander Penrose (1817-1875)' (2006), pp.5. Scottish Episcopal bishop of Brechin.

³⁸² Butler, p.164.

³⁸³ Matthew, p.96.

³⁸⁴ Strong, R., 'High Churchmen and Anglo-Catholics: William Gladstone and the Eucharistic Controversy in the Scottish Episcopal Church, 1856-60,' *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol.22(1996), pp.175-84.

³⁸⁵ *GD*, Vol.5, 13 Oct.1857.

high-church teaching. Forbes was presented for heresy by one of his clergy in October 1859.

Earlier, in February 1858, Forbes had written to Gladstone, seeking through him the advice of Wilberforce.³⁸⁶ In April 1858, Forbes asked Gladstone for his opinion and guidance on setting up a lay memorial in support of him, requesting that Gladstone kept Wilberforce informed of the latest developments.³⁸⁷ In June 1858 Gladstone arranged for Forbes to meet in London with himself, Wilberforce and the Tractarian Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury.³⁸⁸ In November, Gladstone again discussed Forbes with Wilberforce.³⁸⁹ Strong describes how Gladstone acted to intervene with the Scottish bishops, aiming to effect a compromise before the forthcoming trial. He hoped that Forbes would not cause any difficulty, hinting to him that others ‘better personally and officially entitled’ held the same view as Gladstone – meaning Wilberforce.³⁹⁰

Forbes was tried before the other Scottish bishops in March 1860 and was found guilty of erroneous teaching. He was only cautioned, because his ministry among the Dundee poor and his national Tractarian connections brought him powerful support. The bishops were concerned that a more severe sentence would lead to Tractarian schism.³⁹¹

Ritualism

During the Mid-Victorian period, a generation of young men who had been influenced by the original Tractarians became identified as the Ritualist party because of their affinity for more elaborate services and church ornaments. Ritualists looked

³⁸⁶ Add. MS 44154, 14 Feb.1858.

³⁸⁷ Add. MS 44154, 20 April 1858.

³⁸⁸ *GD*, Vol.5, 29 June 1858.

³⁸⁹ *GD*, Vol.5, 2 Nov.1858.

³⁹⁰ Strong, pp.181-2.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.176.

back to the pre-Reformation roots of the undivided church, while maintaining allegiance to the Anglican Church. While the first generation of Tractarians were concerned with doctrine, the Ritualists were mainly concerned with presentational issues. Ritualists tended to practise in poorer parishes where the colour and mystery of their ceremonials brightened the humdrum lives of the parishioners.

Inevitably the Ritualist practices, some of which happened to coincide with the Roman Catholic rubric, caused suspicion and resentment. Old-fashioned High Churchmen did not suffer these innovations gladly. There was vehement and vociferous opposition from the Evangelical wing and the Dissenters. In the 1850s there were anti-Ritualist riots at St Barnabas in Pimlico and in the London Docks at St George in the East.

Archibald Tait,³⁹² who succeeded Longley as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1868, was mildly Broad Church but resolutely Protestant and had Scottish Presbyterian roots.³⁹³ When Parliament convened a Royal Commission on Ritual, Wilberforce was appointed a member of the commission and four reports were issued between 1867 and 1870. While recommendations were made on a number of issues, such as the banning of incense and limitation of altar candles, the clergy generally managed to side-track legislation. These issues were a matter of good sense and consultation. Wilberforce considered that no law could regulate gesture and posture (such as genuflexion), which in his opinion were much better left to the good sense and good feeling of each parish. Wilberforce felt that ‘offence, whether caused by excess or defect in the Divine service, may be removed by strengthening the hands of the Bishop, with appeal to the Archbishop’.³⁹⁴

³⁹² ODNB. Marsh, P.T., ‘Archibald Campbell Tait (1811-82)’ (2004), pp.15. Archbishop of Canterbury. Previously Headmaster of Rugby School, Dean of Carlisle and Bishop of London.

³⁹³ Bebbington (1993), p.226.

³⁹⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.240.

After prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts had failed to stem the advance of Ritualism, the ultra-Protestant zealot Lord Shaftesbury was bent on enforcing the prohibition of Ritualism.³⁹⁵ In 1874 Tait called for Parliament to give the Church of England powers to put down Ritualism by what became the Public Worship Regulation Act. Disraeli (who had succeeded Gladstone as Prime Minister in February 1874) was happy to comply, probably because he saw this issue as being a way of aligning the Conservative party with popular Protestantism. While Tait originally wanted the diocesan bishops to be judges in liturgical matters, he gave way to Shaftesbury's demand that there should only be one judge, and he a layman. By 1877 Tait had begun to back pedal and bishops were encouraged to use their veto on prosecutions.³⁹⁶

Wilberforce was suspected by many, particularly in the Low Church, of having Roman Catholic sympathies. He speculated on the reasons for this in a letter in December 1850 to Lord Ashley (the future Lord Shaftesbury).

I have been very generally blamed for encouraging Romanizing opinions. The alleged proof has been my toleration of Mr Allies.³⁹⁷ Such an impression is...quite untrue. It is however natural, perhaps unavoidable, that with such a press as we have at this time; with my poor brother's notorious course³⁹⁸ & my unknown efforts for years with him, & with my distinctly High Church opinions, that I should have laboured under the unfounded reproach of holding secretly what I have always opposed.³⁹⁹

Wilberforce expressed his feelings on ritualistic practices to Charles Anderson.

There is a great wish to condemn lights, incense, etc. I *hate* them as novelties, but I see so plainly that the party who hate all real Church progress are the

³⁹⁵ Edwards, p.117.

³⁹⁶ Carpenter, E., *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office* (London, 1988), p.349.

³⁹⁷ ODNB. Owen, W.B., 'Thomas William Allies (1813-1903)' (2004), pp.3. Theologian and Roman Catholic convert. A priest in the Diocese of Oxford with extreme Tractarian views which were vigorously opposed by Bishop Wilberforce in the 1840s. Allies became a Roman Catholic in 1849.

³⁹⁸ Henry Wilberforce had become a Roman Catholic in 1850.

³⁹⁹ Pugh, R.K., ed. *The Letter-books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68*. (Buckinghamshire Record Society & Oxford Record Society, 1970), pp.186-7, Letter to Lord Ashley, 3 Dec. 1850.

people who object to them, that it makes me very doubtful how far we can go in repression without repressing that development of real Church life which is our hope. What a plague it is that people cannot have common sense as well as earnestness.⁴⁰⁰

Gladstone, writing to Wilberforce in December 1865, had ‘no prejudices against ritual in itself, far from it.’ He had always sympathized with Archbishop Laud who was

Not seeking to make the nation religious by ritual, but to check and stop the dislodgment of old religious feelings from their accustomed and immemorial homes in the forms of the Church...the forms should follow the feelings, and not precede them...this has been far, far too little borne in mind.⁴⁰¹

Gladstone dreaded the condemnation of ‘this or that point of ritual’. In 1878 he told Sir Robert Phillimore:⁴⁰² ‘My sympathy with the Ritualists is founded entirely on the one-sided, shabby, cruel treatment of them’.⁴⁰³

Wilberforce in his Charge of 1866 was prepared for an increase in ceremonial, as long as it was not contrary to law, did not promote false doctrine or corrupt practice, was not condemned by living authority, and that it was ‘the gradual expression in outer things of the advancement of the Church’s inward life. Life implied, of necessity, change’ and ‘a moderate and sober development of ceremonial belong necessarily to the Church as a living body’. Legislation of ritual would be premature and dangerous, while legal proceedings would promote dissent.⁴⁰⁴ In March 1867, Gladstone had attended a service at the Ritualistic Chiswick Chapel. The next day he wrote to Wilberforce: ‘There was much in it I did not like – could not defend as good,

⁴⁰⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.183.

⁴⁰¹ Lathbury, Vol. 1, pp.378. 31 Dec. 1865.

⁴⁰² ODNB. Doe, N. ‘Robert Joseph Phillimore (1810-1885)’ (2004), pp.6. 1st. baronet. Lawyer. Author of standard work on Ecclesiastical Law. A great personal friend of both Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone. He succeeded his father as Chancellor of the Diocese of Oxford in February 1855.

⁴⁰³ Lathbury, Vol. 1, p.376.

⁴⁰⁴ Wilberforce S., *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at his seventh visitation*, (1866).

perhaps could not claim toleration for. But that must be the last, the very last resort'.⁴⁰⁵ Gladstone was very strongly opposed to the Public Worship Regulation Bill, regarding it as an Erastian interference on the Church. Although he moved a whole series of resolutions on the floor of the House of Commons, the measure was eventually carried. Pouring scorn on the Bill, Gladstone, who always regarded the diversity of the Church of England as being one of its strengths, considered that it was designed to make the clergy 'march like the Guards, in the same uniform, with the same step, and to the same word of command'.⁴⁰⁶

Confession was a Ritualist practice with which Wilberforce did not agree. He believed 'it to be injurious to the moral and spiritual nature of Christians thus to substitute confession to man for confession to God'. He considered that Christians 'through direction by God's word and the ordinary ministry of his Ministers can guide themselves...and can safely manage their own conscience. The confessions and absolutions of the daily service and communion should be sufficient'.⁴⁰⁷ Yet Wilberforce considered that confession could be justified when there is: '(1) the consciousness of some sin burdening the conscience and which a general confession and absolution do not remove, (2) when there is some real question as to duty which another can help us to solve'.⁴⁰⁸

Gladstone took a similar line on Confession in a letter to Manning in 1847. In a particularly tortuous sentence he considered that:

The twofold system of compulsory confession for retrospect, and direction for prospect, not, or scarcely less, compulsory, do in practice so work as very frequently and extensively to take out of the hands of the individual Christian the chief care of, and therewith the chief responsibility for, his own conduct,

⁴⁰⁵ *GD*, Vol.6, 10 March 1857.

⁴⁰⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 3 June 1874, Vol. 120, cc.1381.

⁴⁰⁷ *Letterbooks*, pp.183-5. Letter to Rev. C.Marriott, 23 Nov. 1850.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.331. Letter to Mrs Sidney Herbert, 16 Aug. 1855.

and that *therefore* it is that in this country, notwithstanding our sins and miseries, the moral sense upon the whole is at this moment more generally clear and strong than in the lands where the Roman Church bears sway.⁴⁰⁹

A few years later, Wilberforce became embroiled in a Ritualistic issue close to home. Wilberforce had appointed Henry Liddon⁴¹⁰ as vice-principal of the newly founded Cuddesdon theological college. Liddon established the tone of the place with his considerable strength of character and deep commitment to Tractarian ‘church principles’. He encouraged ritual variations in chapel services of which Wilberforce did not approve.⁴¹¹ Liddon’s vigorous views soon attracted opposition from some Evangelical bishops and, most vehemently and persistently, by a High and Dry clergyman called Golightly.⁴¹² In January 1858 Whitewell Elwin, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, which had Evangelical sympathies, wrote an article criticising theological colleges, drawing his examples almost entirely from Cuddesdon, which he had briefly visited the previous year. He reported that ‘students were encouraged to indulge tastes for indiscreet ritualistic practices which would alienate them from the parishes where they would eventually work’.⁴¹³ Golightly circulated a letter to the clergy of the Oxford diocese, drawing their attention to the article. Wilberforce asked Gladstone to procure an editorial disclaimer. Gladstone saw the editor of the *Quarterly Review* on 12 April 1858 and reported back that he had ‘made the best suggestion that I could under the circumstances’ and that the disclaimer would be a

⁴⁰⁹ Lathbury, Vol.2, pp.277-8, 20 March 1847.

⁴¹⁰ ODNB. Chandler, M., ‘Henry Parry Liddon (1829-1890)’ (2004), pp.9. Church of England clergyman and theologian. Vice-principal of Cuddesdon, then Vice-principal of St Edmund Hall, Oxford and from 1870 Canon of St Paul’s Cathedral.

⁴¹¹ Meacham, p.197.

⁴¹² ODNB. Murphy, G.M., ‘Charles Pourtales Golightly (1807-85)’ (2004), pp.2. Church of England clergyman and religious controversialist. His main energies were devoted to vigorous and vigilant defence of traditional High Church principles against encroachments of Romanism.

⁴¹³ Church Extension, *Quarterly Review* Vol.103 (1858), pp.139-63.

general one with avoidance of details which might provoke continuing controversy.⁴¹⁴

The note that was subsequently published stated:

As our assertions have been supposed to imply a belief that Roman Catholic doctrines were favoured at the College...no such suspicion entered our minds. The questions were purely questions of ritual, upon which there is and always has been great difference of opinion within the English Church, and though we retain the same sentiments we expressed in the article, we entirely acquit the authorities of entertaining any ulterior or covert designs'.⁴¹⁵

Wilberforce thanked Gladstone and declared that 'nothing could be better than the settlement you made'.⁴¹⁶ Significant doctrinal differences between Liddon and Wilberforce remained until Liddon resigned in 1859.

The Broad Church

The Broad Church was not a party as such, but a collection of individuals who had the common aim of bringing Christian teaching up to date and giving it relevance to everyday life.^{417 418} This was done by subjecting the authority of the Bible and Church to criticism based on historical and scientific evidence, as well as recent philosophical developments, in the hope of discovering new truths. The resultant open-mindedness, it was hoped, would strengthen the Church and reduce its traditional divisions. This move from dogmatism and superstition to a more relevant and unified Christianity would induce a higher level of morality and spirituality. Broad Churchmen believed that the spirit of Christianity and of the Church of England was strong enough to withstand rational criticism and would be strengthened by sweeping away false or antiquated precepts. As the Broad Church gained momentum around the middle and the second half of the nineteenth century, many

⁴¹⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.364.

⁴¹⁵ *Quarterly Review*, 1858, Vol.103, p.574

⁴¹⁶ Add MSS 44344, 14 April 1858.

⁴¹⁷ Bebbington (1993), pp.17-18.

⁴¹⁸ Crowther, pp.29-30.

shades of opinion developed among Broad Churchmen. They often disagreed with one another, whilst arousing fear and anger in orthodox clergymen of whatever shade of opinion.

German theologians had a strong influence on many Broad Church thinkers. Unlike Anglican clergymen, limited by having to subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles and the Prayer Book, German theologians were university based academics without such constraints. A main thrust of German religious thinking was that the traditional elements of Christianity, particularly miracles and prophecies, were no longer sufficient and must be replaced by a faith based on moral principles.⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, it was held that man was possessed by an innate sense of moral justice through which he was able to judge revealed religion. In other words, Christianity survived because it was moral, not because Christ had been able to work miracles. The various Germanic conclusions were not accepted by all Broad Churchmen. Baron von Bunsen, the distinguished Prussian scholar and diplomat, introduced German scholarship into England when he was Prussian ambassador to the Court of St James from 1842 to 1854.⁴²⁰

Early eminent Broad Churchmen included Thomas Arnold⁴²¹, Connop Thirlwall⁴²² and Julius Hare.⁴²³ All three were close friends of Bunsen. A later

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.40.

⁴²⁰ *ODNB*. Stark, S., 'Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen, Baron von Bunsen in the Prussian nobility (1791-1860)' (2004), pp.6. Diplomatist and scholar. A student of history, archaeology, comparative philosophy and religion. He was a devout Lutheran and had an English wife.

⁴²¹ *ODNB*. Reeve, A.J.H. 'Thomas Arnold (1795-1842)' (2007), pp.12. Headmaster and historian. He was Headmaster of Rugby School from 1827. He had doubts about the 39 Articles and was not ordained until he reached a compromise with the Church in 1828.

⁴²² *ODNB*. Clark, J.W. 'Connop Thirlwall (1797-1842)' (2006), pp.7. Historian and Bishop of St David's.

⁴²³ *ODNB*. Distad, N.M., 'Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855)' (2006), pp.6. Author and Church of England clergyman. Archdeacon of Lewes from 1840.

generation of prominent Broad Churchmen included Henry Wilson⁴²⁴, Rowland Williams⁴²⁵, Benjamin Jowett⁴²⁶ and Mark Pattison.⁴²⁷

Samuel Wilberforce led the charge on behalf of orthodoxy. In 1861 he preached two powerful sermons from the university pulpit on the subject of Doubt, clearly aimed at Broad Churchmen but pitched at susceptible undergraduates. He described doubt as ‘a moral sickness’ which arose from the belief that unaided intellect could judge the truth of certain parts of the Bible, finally resulting in a rejection of the whole: ‘It is but the smallest part of the mysteries of the eternal world which can be grasped by our feeble faculties...Once let the mind, instead of receiving humbly, begin to doubt, and doubt will be everywhere’.⁴²⁸ A lurid description of the death of a doubter in agonies of despair at his own uncertainty was followed by a solemn warning to teachers who had planted the seeds of criticism in people’s minds. Doubt should be thrown away ‘as if it was a loaded shell shot into the fortress of the soul’.⁴²⁹ In Cuddesdon, Wilberforce tested candidates for ordination by differences between the two propositions ‘The Bible *contains* the word of God’ and ‘The Bible *is* the word of God’, urging the latter as the only adequate definition.⁴³⁰ Wilberforce served on a Convocational commission in the 1860s to investigate the problems of the latitude of clerical belief. He concluded that while absolute unity of view was ‘incompatible with the inalienable freedom of the human mind,’ the Church had to remember that it

⁴²⁴ ODNB. Carlyle, E.I., ‘Henry Bristow Wilson (1803-1888)’ (2004), pp.3. Church of England clergyman and religious writer. Professor of Old English at Oxford 1839-44, vicar of Great Staughton from 1850 until his death.

⁴²⁵ ODNB. Robbins, K., ‘Rowland Williams (1817-1870)’ (2004), pp.5. Church of England clergyman. Vice-principal and Professor of Hebrew at St David’s College, Lampeter in 1850 but was forced to resign in 1862, whereupon he took a living near Salisbury.

⁴²⁶ ODNB. Hinchliffe, P. & Prest, J., ‘Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893)’ (2006), pp.14. A reforming Master of Balliol College from 1870 and Vice-chancellor of Oxford University 1882-6.

⁴²⁷ ODNB. Jones, H.S., ‘Mark Pattison (1813-1884)’ (2006), pp.12. College head and scholar. Initially a Tractarian, ordained priest in 1843. Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford in 1861. Considered the claims of science and theology were incompatible and became an agnostic.

⁴²⁸ Wilberforce, S., ‘The Revelation of God and the Probation of Man’ in *Sermons preached before the University of Oxford 1842-1862* (Oxford & London, 1863), p.27.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* pp.32-3.

⁴³⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.334.

taught 'not as an enquiry into philosophy but as revealed truth, a positive set of doctrines.'⁴³¹

Gladstone's response to those who doubted the veracity of the Bible was to challenge their level of certainty. The doubter is blamed, not because he cannot believe, but because he does not really wish to believe.⁴³² Gladstone applied the Butlerian principles of decision-making based on probabilities and scrutiny of both sides of an argument. When one sceptic maintained that orthodox conclusions were not certain Gladstone replied:

Granted they are not, are the conclusions you seek to substitute for them any more certain? Upon other matters we are constantly compelled to accept probable conclusions as best we can get, and we do in fact act upon them as though they were certain. Religion is not exempt from this universal law.⁴³³

In the same vein, he declared in 1873 that: 'partial knowledge may be true knowledge, given that the limits of our real knowledge are infinitely narrow'.⁴³⁴

Writing to Samuel Laing⁴³⁵ in 1885, Gladstone further developed this theme:

To say that we cannot have partial but real knowledge of God is, I will not say irreligious – for we are simply testing the region of fact – but in the highest degree [is] irrational...The use of figure and parable, which both believers and nonbelievers are apt to treat as weakening the Bible, may be among the most solid proofs, in the end of its august origin.⁴³⁶

Gladstone, writing to Lord Acton⁴³⁷, reasoned that: 'The Old Testament destructives... seem to me sadly wanting in the elements of rational probability'.⁴³⁸

⁴³¹ Wilberforce, S., 'Clerical Subscription', *Quarterly Review* (1865), 117, p.452.

⁴³² Lathbury, Vol.2, p.77. 21 July 1847.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.77. 21 July 1847.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p 94. 29 Sept.1873.

⁴³⁵ ODNB. Seccombe, T., 'Samuel Laing (1812-1897)' (2004), pp.3. Politician, author and railway executive. Author in 1885 of *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, a popular exposition of Darwinism and the incompatibility of the data of modern science and 'revealed religion'. A supplementary chapter of the 3rd edition (1886) contained a crushing reply to Gladstone's defence of the Book of Genesis.

⁴³⁶ Lathbury, Vol.2, pp.115-6, 9 Sept. 1888.

⁴³⁷ ODNB. Altholz, J.L., 'John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, first Baron Acton (1834-1902)' (2008), pp.11. Historian and moralist. Liberal Roman Catholic; became a scientific and critical historian,

Gladstone accepted that there were some factual errors in the New Testament, as pointed out to him by Pusey.⁴³⁹ Gladstone thought that Christians should very freely deal with the prevailing scepticism on its merits:

The large family of *isms*, huddled together under its name, present to my view not much either of duty or of strength. They have had a factitious advantage in this, that the work of clearing orthodoxy of its factitious encumbrances has seemed to be more or less their work.⁴⁴⁰

However, in 1868 Gladstone favourably reviewed Sir John Seeley's⁴⁴¹ *Ecce Homo*, a life of Christ which included no hint of his divinity but was a study of the foundations of Christian morality.⁴⁴² ⁴⁴³ While the book stimulated opprobrium among many churchmen (including Pusey, Manning and Shaftesbury), Gladstone hailed 'the entrance into the world of a strong constructive book on the Christian system'.⁴⁴⁴ In 1869, Gladstone, then Prime Minister, appointed Seeley to the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge University. Gladstone also gave ecclesiastical appointments to Broad Churchmen, including the promotion of Charles Kingsley⁴⁴⁵ in 1873 to a canonry at Westminster Abbey.

In the 1850s Benjamin Jowett and Frederick Temple⁴⁴⁶ invited several Broad Churchmen to contribute to an anthology which would encourage free and honest discussions of Biblical questions. They stipulated that nothing should be written that

especially critical of the Roman Catholic church. Confidant and advisor of Gladstone. Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, 1895.

⁴³⁸ Lathbury, Vol.2, p.119, undated.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.108, 23 Oct.1885.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.123, 3 Dec.1893.

⁴⁴¹ *ODNB*. Shannon, R.T., 'Sir John Seeley (1834-1895)' (2004), pp.8. Historian. Professor of Latin at University College, London 1863. Regius Professor of Modern History, Cambridge from 1869.

⁴⁴² Bebbington (1993), p.234.

⁴⁴³ Chadwick, Part 2, pp.64-6.

⁴⁴⁴ Lathbury, Vol.2, p 88, 25 Dec.1865.

⁴⁴⁵ *ODNB*, Vance, N., 'Charles Kingsley(1819-1875)' (2009), pp.8. Novelist, Church of England clergyman and controversialist. Preceded Seeley as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1860. Broad Churchman and Christian Socialist.

⁴⁴⁶ *ODNB*. Spooner, H.M., 'Frederick Temple (1821-1902)' (2008), pp.8. Archbishop of Canterbury. Ordained priest in 1847. An educational reformer, he was appointed Headmaster of Rugby School in 1857. Offered four bishoprics by Gladstone and accepted see of Exeter in 1869. Appointed Bishop of London by Gladstone in 1885, and Archbishop of Canterbury by Salisbury in 1896.

‘would be inconsistent with the position of ministers of our Church.’⁴⁴⁷ Contributors were Mark Pattison, Temple, Jowett, H.B.Wilson, Rowland Williams, Baden Powell⁴⁴⁸ and C.W.Goodwin⁴⁴⁹, who was the only layman.

When this collection of essays was published in 1860 under the title *Essays and Reviews* it angered a wide spectrum of churchmen from Evangelicals to Tractarians. The book stirred up controversy, more because its authors were clergymen rather than its originality of ideas.⁴⁵⁰ Fifteen thousand copies were sold in the three months following publication. John Morley described *Essays and Reviews* ‘as a whole mildly rationalistic, and the negations, such as they were, exhibited none of the fierceness or aggression that had marked the old controversies about Hampden or Tract Ninety’.⁴⁵¹

Some coherent lines of thought emerged from the book: Firstly, it was time to begin reconciliation between Christianity and the modern mind. Second, because all truth is of God, there was no need to fear any reasonable investigation of truth, whether by geologist or historian. Third, the truth of Christianity should not be tied to the maintenance of the exact truth of a detailed record of events. Finally, that the truth of the revelation of God does not hang upon miracles, but the truth of miracles hangs upon the revelation of God.⁴⁵²

Wilberforce quickly condemned *Essays and Reviews*. He wrote in the *Quarterly Review* that the writers could not ‘with moral honesty maintain their posts as

⁴⁴⁷ E.G.Sanford, ed., *Memoirs of Archbishop Temple* (2 vols., London, 1906), Vol.1, p.223.

⁴⁴⁸ ODNB.Corsi, P., ‘Baden Powell (1796-1860)’ (2004), pp.4. Physicist and theologian. Ordained 1821. Experimented with radiant heat and wave theory of light. Appointed Professor of Geometry at Oxford in 1827. Embraced the new theories of evolution.

⁴⁴⁹ ODNB. Espinasse, F., ‘Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (1817-1878)’ (2004), pp.2. Egyptologist. Also practiced Law and was appointed assistant judge in supreme court for China and Japan in 1865. In *Essays and Reviews* criticised the attempts to harmonise the creation story in Genesis with the discoveries of modern geology.

⁴⁵⁰ Crowther, p.31.

⁴⁵¹ Morgan, J.H., *John, Viscount Morley: An Appreciation and some Reminiscences* (London, 1925), Vol.2, p.163.

⁴⁵² Chadwick, Part 2, pp.76-7.

clergymen of the established church'.⁴⁵³ Their 'earnestness of character, piety of spirit and high moral object' would make especially younger minds who read the essays all the more susceptible to their arguments. While some essays were less pernicious than others, all seven men had to bear equally the blame for the damage that would be done by the book as a whole. Stating how wrong it was to treat the Bible like any other book, Wilberforce raised the question of how could the writer of Genesis explain the cosmology without divine enlightenment. By arguing away all dogma and revelation, the essayists had ended by dismissing Christianity itself. God's truth could not be explained by rationalism and faith could not be abandoned to reason.⁴⁵⁴ The article was so widely read that this issue of the *Quarterly Review* went through five editions.⁴⁵⁵ Josef Altholz describes the article as showing Wilberforce's style 'at its most effective, sometimes slashing, often clever, full of telling phrases, masking invectiveness with authoritiveness and religious fervour... It was intellectually able, presenting the case for dogmatism explicitly and reasonably,' although 'it was sullied by the personalistic element'.⁴⁵⁶ In his Charge of 1863, Wilberforce condemned the book as symptomatic of the threat of rationalism, 'an endeavour to get rid of all belief in the personal acting amidst us of any supernatural power, whether in the realms of matter or of spirit'.⁴⁵⁷

Gladstone's views of *Essays and Reviews* are unclear. However, in a letter to the Bishop of Lichfield on 17 November 1869 Gladstone stated that he looked 'with a strong aversion' on some of the articles in the book.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ 'Essays and Reviews' in *Quarterly Review* (1861), Vol.109, p.302.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.250.

⁴⁵⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.2.

⁴⁵⁶ Altholz, J.L., *Anatomy of a Controversy: The debate over Essays and Reviews* (Aldershot, 1994), p.45.

⁴⁵⁷ *Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford*, 1863, p.45.

⁴⁵⁸ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.201, 17 Nov.1869.

The archbishops and bishops, meeting in February 1861, felt the need to respond to complaints they had received on *Essays and Reviews* but were uncertain as to what form this response should take. Wilberforce considered that an Episcopal declaration against the book would be unwise; it could put the bishops in an awkward position of originating an action and it would condemn the essayists unheard. He was asked to draft an answer to one of the letters of complaint. This was published over the Archbishop of Canterbury's signature with the names of the Archbishop of York and twenty-three bishops appended. While not mentioning *Essays and Reviews* by name, the letter stressed that the opinions published could not be 'held consistently with an honest subscription to the formularies of our Church, with many of the fundamental doctrines of which they appear to us essentially at variance'. A suit in the Ecclesiastical Courts and synodical condemnation were alternatives 'under our gravest consideration'.⁴⁵⁹

At a further meeting in March 1861, the bishops voted by a narrow margin that any prosecution of the authors should be left to individual bishops. The Tractarian Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury initiated proceedings against Rowland Williams who was beneficed in his diocese. H.B. Wilson, who had contributed an essay on the National Church, was an incumbent in the diocese of Ely. Although Bishop Turton of Ely did not personally bring a suit against Wilson, he permitted a rector, James Fendall to institute proceedings. Wilberforce contributed £200 towards Fendall's legal expenses, and was 'ready when required to supply a second sum of the same amount'.⁴⁶⁰

Convocation postponed its decision on action until the two cases were in the courts. Wilberforce, explained in a letter to Bishop Ollivant of Llandaff that he

⁴⁵⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.5.

⁴⁶⁰ *Letterbooks*, p.380, Letter to Rev. James Fendall, 23 Aug. 1862.

believed Convocation might exercise a sort of judgement denied the State-controlled Judicial Committee and thus protect doctrine from inappropriate interference by uncommitted laymen. This judgement would be from the Church's role as defender of Christian truth and would therefore not be at odds with the authority assigned to the Church within the State. Wilberforce argued that Convocation should act immediately rather than await a judgement from the Privy Council.⁴⁶¹ However, Convocation decided to do nothing until the case had passed through the courts.

In 1862 Sir Stephen Lushington,⁴⁶² the Judge of the Court of Arches, found that Williams had contradicted the articles of religion by describing the Bible as 'an expression of devout reason'. He condemned Wilson for denying inspiration and eternal punishment, but rejected the majority of charges, whilst suspending both men from their benefices for one year. Williams and Wilson appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which gave its judgement in 1864. The majority (Lord Chancellor Westbury and three Law Lords plus Bishop Tait of London) cleared Williams and Wilson while the two Archbishops dissented. In April 1864, Wilberforce brought the book before the upper house of Convocation. Two months later a synodical condemnation of the book was carried in both houses. When defending the action of Convocation in the House of Lords, Wilberforce responded to a personally insulting speech by Lord Westbury who considered the synodical judgement to have been worded so carefully that it did not fix on any particular author or point of doctrine, and dissolved in a vague cloud of disapproval. Westbury declared that Convocation had no right to pronounce in the matter, since the condemnation, resting outside the law, allowed for no appeal to the Crown.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.363-4, Letter to Bishop of Llandaff, 3 July 1861.

⁴⁶² *ODNB*. Waddams, S.M., 'Sir Stephen Lushington (1782-1873)' (2004), pp.6. Judge. Judge of Court of Arches from 1858. Active in abolition of slave trade and emancipation of slaves. Conservative in theology but liberal in politics.

Wilberforce contended that Convocation had tried, not to prevent freedom of opinion in the Church, but to set the minds of many troubled clergymen at rest. He concluded that:

If you would avoid the recurrence of such a state of things as you have witnessed...the best way in which that can be done is by allowing the Church in its authorised manner to pronounce for her followers...that she disclaims for her living ministry this erroneous teaching.⁴⁶³

Gladstone endorsed Wilberforce's appraisal, writing in September 1864:

It is not necessary to *oppose* the judgement [of the Privy Council]. Taking the ground of the judges themselves, that of legal interpretation...it is plain that they are disqualified by their own confession from looking to the preservation of the Christian faith – and consequently they leave that to others who must use other means.⁴⁶⁴

In January 1865, Gladstone wrote:

I agree in the necessity of taking precautions against the establishment...of new doctrines for that Christian Faith...further, I believe it has been a mistake...to institute the coercive proceedings that have led to the present state of things...we had lived into a time when, penal proceedings for the maintenance of Divine Truth among the clergy would have to be abandoned, and moral means alone depended on.⁴⁶⁵

Writing to the Bishop of Salisbury in February 1864, it seemed to Gladstone that these judgements are:

Parts of a vast scheme of forces and events in the midst of which we stand, which seem to govern us, but are in reality governed by a hand above. It may be that this rude shock to the mere scripturism which has too much

⁴⁶³ *Hansard*, HL Deb, July 15, 1864, Vol. 176, cc.1563-1565. Westbury during this debate called Convocation's judgement, which Wilberforce had masterminded, 'a sentence so oily and saponaceous, that no one could grasp it-like an eel, it slips through your fingers and is simply nothing.' Wilberforce at the time had the nickname 'Soapy Sam'.

⁴⁶⁴ BL, II.K, 7 Sept.1864

⁴⁶⁵ Morley, Vol.2, p.165.

prevailed, is intended to be the instrument of restoring a greater harmony of belief, and of the agencies for maintaining belief.⁴⁶⁶

Frederick Temple had produced a rehash of one of his sermons on 'The Education of the World', delivered in 1858. This was an innocuous and non-controversial piece, but Temple was regarded as guilty by association with the other contributors to *Essays and Reviews*. In 1869 Temple, the headmaster of Rugby School, was nominated by Gladstone to the bishopric of Exeter. The nomination provoked a storm of protest which included the setting up of a committee, chaired by Lord Shaftesbury with Pusey as vice-chairman, to resist Temple's appointment. No one had impugned the orthodoxy of his essay and the only charge against him was that he was that he was one of the writers in a book which had been condemned by Convocation. Temple did not help his cause by refusing to dissociate himself from the book. His service of consecration was delayed when four bishops entered protests against the proceedings until Temple had cleared his name. Wilberforce, who was invited to be one of the consecrators, refused to take part, even though he had ordained Temple as both deacon and priest and was personally satisfied with the orthodoxy of his opinions. Wilberforce wrote to Arthur Gordon in January 1870: 'I deeply regret the appointment [of Temple to Exeter], because he has so obstinately refused to part himself from the *Essays and Reviews* in their censured parts'.⁴⁶⁷ Temple withdrew his essay from publication the following month, on the grounds that as a bishop he needed to tread a more cautious line, although still feeling no need to apologise.⁴⁶⁸

Pusey had protested directly to Gladstone in October 1869, accusing Temple, wrongly as Gladstone pointed out, of being editor of *Essays and Reviews*. In reply to

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.164-5.

⁴⁶⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.339.

⁴⁶⁸ Chadwick, Part 2, p.89.

Pusey on 9 October 1869, Gladstone regretted that Temple had published the essay 'in objectional company' but did not consider that this act 'was such as ought to bar his preferment,' for Temple was known to be 'a man of deep personal piety, great ability, great administrative powers, and marked habits of conciliation in dealing with men'. While the opinions contained in Temple's sermons were not those Gladstone would proscribe to, Gladstone considered that 'no one should be appointed to the Episcopal body whose loyalty either to the Church or the principle of doctrine can be questioned, or whose admission to it would impair corporate unity,' while it did 'not shut out all differences'.⁴⁶⁹ Writing to Bishop Selwyn of Lichfield on 17 November 1869, Gladstone considered that 'the question whether he [Temple] ought to have disclaimed or denounced any part of the volume afterwards is a difficult one, and if it was a duty, it was a duty in regard to which a generous man might well go wrong. As regards his own essay, I...thought it of little value, but did not perceive that it was mischievous'.⁴⁷⁰

3.3 Other Disputes within the Church of England

F.D.Maurice and King's College London

Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72), Professor of English Literature and History at King's College London from 1840 to 1853, was one of the most significant Anglican theologians of the nineteenth century. He founded, with Charles Kingsley, the Christian Socialist movement.⁴⁷¹ Maurice ascribed parties in the Church to 'the devilish spirit of sectarianism' and refused to be the leader of a Broad Church

⁴⁶⁹ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.200, 9 Oct.1869.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.201, 9 Oct.1869

⁴⁷¹ *ODNB*. Reardon, B.M.G., 'Maurice, (John) Frederick Denison (1805-1872)' (2006), pp.15. Church of England clergyman and theologian.

party.⁴⁷² In 1841 he had published an open letter to Archdeacon Samuel Wilberforce entitled *Reasons for Not Joining a Party in the Church*.⁴⁷³

In 1853 Maurice published *Theological Essays*, a book based on a series of sermons he had preached earlier that year. The essays were poorly written and lacked clarity. In the words of Owen Chadwick: ‘The tone was intense, the inspiration jerky’.⁴⁷⁴ Nevertheless, *Theological Essays* was an important statement of Maurice’s views, in particular of his convictions on the doctrine of the eternal punishment of impenitent sinners, which orthodox theology held to be an indispensable belief. Maurice could not believe that impenitence at death necessarily meant the soul’s damnation and consignment to everlasting torments.⁴⁷⁵ R.W.Jelf⁴⁷⁶, the Principal of King’s College, decided that Maurice was not fit to teach at the College because he did not believe in everlasting punishment. Jelf may well have been influenced by Bishop Blomfield⁴⁷⁷ of London who had declared that he would not accept candidates for ordination from King’s College as long as Maurice was a member of the Faculty.

Samuel Wilberforce had ordained Maurice and they remained in touch thereafter. Wilberforce admired Maurice as a devout if confused Christian. Given Wilberforce’s track record of trenchantly defending the orthodox, it is surprising that he was to take so much time and trouble in a spirited support of an issue which lay in the shadowlands between heresy and orthodoxy. Friendship and personal admiration of Maurice presumably overcame any misgivings. Wilberforce wrote in his diary on 18 August 1853: ‘Read a great deal of Maurice’s Essays, many striking things in them

⁴⁷² Edwards, p.147.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.146.

⁴⁷⁴ Chadwick, Part 1, p.545.

⁴⁷⁵ Maurice, F., ed. *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice* 3rd ed. (2 vols., London: 1884), Vol.2, p.15.

⁴⁷⁶ ODNB.Greenhill, W.A., ‘Richard William Jelf (1798-1871)’ (2004), pp.2. Canon of Christ Church 1830-71, Principal of King’s College London 1844-68. A High Churchman usually of similar views to those of Samuel Wilberforce, and an active member of Convocation.

⁴⁷⁷ ODNB, Burns, A., ‘Blomfield, Charles James (1786-1857)’ (2008), pp.13. Bishop of Chester 1824-28, Bishop of London 1828-57. Blomfield, like Samuel Wilberforce, was an old fashioned High Churchman troubled with overzealous Tractarians and a public figure of great significance.

but I think a great deal of obscurity. I really hardly can discover in what sense he holds the Atonement – set me thinking much’.⁴⁷⁸ Wilberforce attempted to persuade Jelf to retain Maurice in post.⁴⁷⁹ Jelf had decided that the final decision would rest with a meeting of the College Council in October 1853. The Council consisted mainly of laymen, including Gladstone, and some clergymen, of whom only the Bishop of London attended the decisive meeting. In the meantime, Wilberforce advised Maurice on how he could clarify the orthodoxy of his opinions to Jelf and the Council.⁴⁸⁰ He also wrote to the Bishop of London, giving his personal view that Maurice was entirely orthodox and that the Council should appoint ‘a committee of divines to report on the book, express its erroneous teaching in propositions, and hear Mr Maurice in his own defence’ before it pronounces ‘a censure which will represent the Church of England as defining very narrowly a question of terms, while it leaves open such broad questions as the doctrine of baptism’ [c.f. the Gorham Case]. By censuring a doctrine, Jelf would be admitting that the Council ‘had a right to decide on doctrine to the detriment of the Church of England and if it had a right to require its Professors to accept on matters not defined by the Church of England the Principal’s definitions of their continuing to teach – to the great injury of the Professors’.⁴⁸¹

Writing to Gladstone, Wilberforce was: ‘most anxious to prevent the hard and irritating censure of such a man as Maurice, when so many really unsound men go uncensored’.⁴⁸² Gladstone reported the outcome of the Council meeting to Wilberforce: ‘They have done the deed, i.e. declared Maurice’s statements to be of dangerous tendency, and resolved that his connection with the theology of the college

⁴⁷⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.208.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.209-10.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp.210-12.

⁴⁸¹ *Letterbooks*, pp.281-2, Letter to the Bishop of London (C.J.Blomfield), 26 Oct.1853.

⁴⁸² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.215.

ought not to continue. I moved that the Bishop of London be requested to appoint theologians to examine, but in vain'.⁴⁸³ Writing to Gerald Wellesley, Dean of Windsor, Gladstone was pained by the 'total incompetence of the Council generally to apply judicial principles and rules to a matter of theology'. Although in Gladstone's opinion Maurice's propositions did not hang together, Council 'should have let Maurice know for *what* he was dismissed'.⁴⁸⁴

The Colenso Case

John William Colenso,⁴⁸⁵ after a distinguished academic career at Cambridge University, was ordained in 1839. He wrote two very successful mathematical textbooks in the early 1840s. Colenso was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Frederick Maurice. A belief in the universal fatherhood of God and the unity of all humanity, together with doubts about the endlessness of future punishment, characterised his preaching. Colenso desired to undertake missionary work after hearing a sermon preached by Samuel Wilberforce during a tour for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1839. His interest in missions brought him to the attention of Bishop Gray⁴⁸⁶ of Cape Town, whose diocese was being divided into two new sees. One of these, the Diocese of Natal, was offered to Colenso. Wilberforce supported Colenso's appointment and preached the sermon at his consecration in 1853.

In 1861 Colenso produced a small commentary called *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated and Explained from a Missionary Point of View*, expounding Pauline theology crudely, simplistically and in an unqualified manner based on Maurice's doctrine. Colenso stressed that the divine purpose was to destroy

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.215.

⁴⁸⁴ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.361, 2 Nov.1853.

⁴⁸⁵ *ODNB*. Hinchcliff, P., 'Colenso, John William (1814-1883)' (2006), pp.8. Bishop of Natal.

⁴⁸⁶ *ODNB*. Pocock, N. 'Robert Gray (1809-1872)' (2004), pp.5. Bishop of Cape Town 1847-72.

sin rather than punish it and denied belief in eternal punishment, which ran counter to the profession he had made at his consecration.⁴⁸⁷ The following year saw the publication of Colenso's first volume of *Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, influenced by the works of German theologians and the application of mathematics to disprove some Old Testament events. While he considered the Old Testament to be part fable and a compilation of different sources, including the view that the books of Samuel and Jeremiah were forgeries, Colenso took the general Broad Church line that the essential truth of the Bible did not depend on the historical truth of all its narratives. Bishop Gray considered that it was within his authority as metropolitan to try Colenso for heresy and, if found guilty, to deprive him of his office. After publication of the book on *Romans*, in March 1862, Gray wrote to Wilberforce, stating that 'I think the book would be condemned with more weight by you, and that possibly the Archbishop *qua* Patriarch might try him'.⁴⁸⁸ In May 1862, Wilberforce persuaded his fellow bishops to inform Colenso, who was on his way to England at the time, that his book suggested unsound views and invited its suppression, failing which they requested him not to officiate in their dioceses until the matter had been legally examined. Wilberforce wrote to Colenso in London during August: 'You contradict yourself [in your exposition on the Romans] over and over again...There are in it passages...incompatible with the unbroken tradition of the Church's teaching'.⁴⁸⁹ Wilberforce invited Colenso to talk the matter over with him face to face, but Colenso thought that nothing could be gained by such a meeting.⁴⁹⁰ At a private meeting of the bishops on 6 February 1863, after *The Pentateuch Critically Examined* had been published, Wilberforce proposed that

⁴⁸⁷ Chadwick, Part 2, pp.90-1.

⁴⁸⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.114.

⁴⁸⁹ *Letterbooks*, p.369, Letter to the Bishop of Natal (J.W.Colenso), 8 Aug. 1862.

⁴⁹⁰ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.118.

Colenso's guilt would not be assumed as he had not been tried or charged, but that there was 'a great and notorious scandal' was carried on a majority vote. Five days later the bishops met again and a letter called upon Colenso to resign his bishopric, which he refused to do.⁴⁹¹ Gray took matters into his own hands and deposed Colenso from office in December 1863 on the grounds of heresy, to take effect from April 1864 if Colenso did not recant in the meantime. Colenso, denying any offence against the established church, appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council who reversed Gray's judgement on the grounds that the Crown had exceeded its powers in issuing letters patent purporting to convey coercive jurisdiction to a bishop in any colony having its own legislative institutions. The letters patent of both bishops were void since the Cape and Natal each possessed its own legislature. Nor did Colenso's oath of canonical obedience to Gray give the metropolitan (Gray) any authority to depose him, for the letters patent were held, in spite of their invalidity, to have created ecclesiastical persons who could not be 'unmade' except by the Crown. Because the letters patent could not confer jurisdiction Colenso ought not to have taken an oath of obedience to a metropolitan who had no authority to demand it.⁴⁸⁵

Wilberforce had been sending the letters he had received from Bishop Gray to Gladstone, before passing them on to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Wilberforce asked Gladstone, in a letter on 25 May 1864, if there was any way in which he could get the judgement of the Court of Appeal changed.⁴⁹² Gladstone replied next day, wondering what would be the correct change, but recommended that any proposal should have the agreement of most of the bishops as soon as it was known how much support there would be for it.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.119-120.

⁴⁹² Add. MS 44344, 25 May 1864.

⁴⁹³ Add. MS 44344, 26 May 1864.

Wilberforce persuaded Gray not to excommunicate Colenso, but instead to ignore and inhibit him.⁴⁹⁴ In November 1866, the Master of the Rolls, Lord Romilly, pronounced Colenso to be entitled to all the property of the diocese of Natal. This case is cited as *Bishop of Natal v Gladstone and others*. Gladstone was the treasurer of the Colonial Bishopricks Fund which was threatening to withhold from Colenso the income from the endowment of the diocese. Writing in April 1866 to Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts,⁴⁹⁵ who had generously endowed the diocese of Cape Town but who now wished to withdraw funding because the church in Africa was independent in law and no longer part of the established church, Gladstone, as a minister of the Crown, had to uphold the decision of the Privy Council. Anticipating the judgement of Lord Romilly, Gladstone could only advise Miss Burdett-Coutts that the supremacy of the Crown, as existed in the Province of Canterbury, was impossible in the Province of South Africa. She would 'have to choose between claiming back your [her] endowment, with whatever likelihood of success, and allowing it to remain, covered by such sanctions and guarantees as the principles of a sound Church constitution, without State aid, can supply'.⁴⁹⁶

Gray tried to get Colenso condemned by the First Lambeth Conference of 1867. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Longley, skilfully refused to put a resolution approving the excommunication and deposition of Colenso before the Conference. Wilberforce, having supported Archbishop Longley's policy that there should be no condemnation of Colenso, now defiantly initiated an unofficial condemnation of the Bishop of Natal. Fifty-six of the seventy-three bishops signed the declaration giving their 'acceptance of the Sentence pronounced upon Dr Colenso by the Metropolitan

⁴⁹⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.128.

⁴⁹⁵ *ODNB*. Healey, E., 'Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906)' (2006), pp.9. Philanthropist. Heiress to a vast banking fortune, she donated over £3,000,000 to various charities at home and in the colonies.

⁴⁹⁶ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.146.

of South Africa and his Suffragans as being spiritually a valid sentence.’⁴⁹⁷ Interestingly, Samuel Wilberforce’s *volte face* in initiating this declaration has not been mentioned by his son in his *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*.

Colenso retained possession of the cathedral and other ecclesiastical buildings in the diocese and drew an income, even though an official replacement had been appointed. Lessons learned from the difficulties and contradictions exposed by the Colenso case eventually helped to free the Church in the colonies from interference by the British Government. The other positive outcome, certainly from Wilberforce’s point of view, was the reaffirmation of the Church’s right to pronounce in defence of orthodoxy.

Bishop Wilberforce and Dr Pusey

Edward Pusey was appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford in 1828. A canonry at Christ Church was attached to the chair. Pusey was intimately involved in the Oxford Movement and, although he was not one of its originators, for a time Tractarianism was also known as Puseyism. Pusey subsequently remained an influential theological figure and acted as the stabilizing force of the Catholic revival, whilst steadfast in his loyalty to the Church of England. Pusey was also a leading ecumenist, particularly concerned with closer ties with both Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox faith. On such counts he was risking conflict with orthodoxy.

When Pusey was banned from preaching at Oxford University for two years in 1843, Wilberforce considered that the main evil of the sermon which had led to the suspension was ‘a sort of misty exaggeration of the whole truth, which is very likely to breed in others direct errors. It certainly seems to me to be in *tone* un-Anglican.’

⁴⁹⁷ Stephenson, A.M.G., *The First Lambeth Conference, 1867* (London, 1967), pp.275-7.

There seemed to be 'a denial of the doctrine of justification by faith as explained in the Epistle to the Romans, and adopted by our Church'.⁴⁹⁸

When Wilberforce had been appointed Bishop of Oxford in 1845, Pusey wrote him a letter of welcome mingled with sympathy because Wilberforce would be returning to Oxford at a time of anxiety and despondency there.⁴⁹⁹ Wilberforce's reply was also two-edged; referring to recent correspondence between Pusey and Newman he did not feel 'that the language therein held as to the errors of the Church of Rome is...to be reconciled with the doctrinal formularies of our own Reformed Church,' but 'I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the prayers and intercessions you promise me'.⁵⁰⁰ Wilberforce would have been particularly conscious at this time of the need to distinguish between the acceptable and dangerous aspects of Tractarianism, particularly following the recent defections to Rome. Pusey replied that he did not feel obliged to renounce any doctrine formally decreed by the Church of Rome and that he hoped for eventual union between the Churches of England and Rome.⁵⁰¹ Wilberforce accused Pusey of having

a subtle and therefore most dangerous form of self-will; and a tendency to view yourself as one in, if not now the leader of a party [i.e. the Tractarians]. This seems to me to lead you to judge the Church which you ought to obey; sometimes to blame, sometimes almost to patronise her...to watch most earnestly against self-dependence and the spirit or acts of party, is at this moment your especial duty.⁵⁰²

In a letter to his friend Miss Noel, Wilberforce described Pusey as being a very holy man but having 'a great want of humility'.⁵⁰³ As Pusey was a canon of Christ Church and University professor, Wilberforce had no jurisdiction over him.

⁴⁹⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.229.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.300-302.

⁵⁰⁰ *Letterbooks*, pp.48-9, Letter to Dr.E.B.Pusey, 24 Nov.1849.

⁵⁰¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.311.

⁵⁰² *Letterbooks*, p.49-50, Letter to Dr.E.B.Pusey, 5 Dec.1849.

⁵⁰³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.311.

This festering antagonism came to a head in May 1850 when William Dodsworth, a Tractarian London vicar, accused Pusey of distributing Roman Catholic devotional books among his followers. Wilberforce urged Pusey to give a public response to Dodsworth's charges. While Wilberforce recognised that Pusey 'had often fruitlessly striven...to retain in the Church of England those who under you, as I believe, had learned to distrust her. But giving the fullest credit to your intentions, this, I am convinced, is the actual result of your teaching'.⁵⁰⁴ Pusey replied that Dodsworth had represented the books unfairly and that he himself encouraged no practices that the formularies of the Church did not themselves countenance.⁵⁰⁵ Wilberforce then requested that Pusey no longer preach within the diocese until he could satisfy Wilberforce as to the correctness of his beliefs.⁵⁰⁶

In further correspondence between November 1850 and May 1851 Wilberforce accused Pusey of practising confession in the habitual Roman sense, rather than as what would be allowable in the Church of England as an occasional 'special remedy for a special disorder.' Pusey stated that he deterred repeated confessions and agreed that confession should never be compulsory. He posed the question: 'What ought I to do as an English priest, if persons ask me from time to time to allow them to open their griefs, and would not be at peace without so doing?' While recognising that Wilberforce may not agree with him, Pusey regarded Absolution as having a sacramental character 'as a means of grace with an outward sign'.⁵⁰⁷ Wilberforce refused Pusey's request to meet him face to face. Pusey then demanded a trial on the grounds of preaching false doctrine. Wilberforce argued that it was for him and not the courts to decide. He had never accused Pusey of heresy. He believed that it was

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.79-81.

⁵⁴¹ Liddon, H.P *The Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey* (4 vols., London, 1893-7), Vol.3, p.303.

⁵⁰⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.81-2.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.93.

Pusey's 'adapted Roman devotions' and a 'tendency' in his private ministry which had led some 'into such a state of feeling towards Rome and Roman uses, as that they have, to your great grief, passed onto Rome'.⁵⁰⁸

Gladstone attempted to break the deadlock. A diary entry for 3 June 1851 was 'Saw Bishop of Oxford on the Pusey fulmen'.⁵⁰⁹ A week later Gladstone saw Pusey, who was 'not to me satisfactory about conciliatory steps'.⁵¹⁰ Gladstone cautioned Pusey against bringing the matter to a head by a public clash. The Bishop's 'marvellously acute and rapid mind was immature'. A crisis might 'precipitate in fixed form his cruder ideas and check the free growth of those, which, but for that crisis, may be destined to correct and overrule them'.⁵¹¹

Wilberforce eventually agreed to meet Pusey. It was decided that Pusey should continue to abstain from preaching within the diocese until Wilberforce could condemn in his forthcoming charge, in November 1851, the threat of Roman aggression and specifically the sort of devotional books Pusey had adapted for Anglican use. In May 1852, Wilberforce having convinced himself that Pusey intended to keep as many within the Church as he could and having publicly stated his own opinion on the devotional books, permitted Pusey freedom to preach.

3.4 Evolutional Theory and the Challenge to Christian Belief

Between 1820 and 1840 geology became the science of the day. Geology showed that Creation was not a 'one off', but was a slowly developing and continuous

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.110.

⁵⁰⁹ *GD*, Vol.4, 3 June 1851.

⁵¹⁰ *GD*, Vol.4, 10 June 1851.

⁵¹¹ Liddon, Vol.3, p.324.

process. *Principles of Geology*, written in 1830-3 by Charles Lyell⁵¹², attributed the present condition of the earth's surface as being due to a uniform process of gradual development.⁵¹³ The most eminent geologists of the day were both devout clergymen. Adam Sedgwick⁵¹⁴ was Professor of Geology at Cambridge and William Buckland was Professor of Geology at Oxford. They and other clergymen who were also scientists recognised that there was an expansion of created time before the appearance of Man. Geological strata showed a slow succession of higher and higher animals. Buckland, among others, considered that this was not inconsistent with God being the originator of all the natural world and declared that the six 'days' of creation were unspecified epochs.⁵¹⁵

Darwinism

The notion of evolution was further expanded by the work of Charles Darwin.⁵¹⁶ *Origin of Species*, which was published in 1859, propounded Darwin's theory of organic evolution in a number of propositions which can be summarised thus: Life of all kinds and at all times has shown great variety, but it is a variety in which striking similarities of form and pattern can be traced. Moreover, varieties of life fit themselves to their particular environment with great exactitude. These facts lead to the supposition that there were not a vast number of separate acts of creation but a process of gradual change, or evolution. Evolution came about by two phenomena: first, in all forms of life too many offspring are produced and only some will survive;

⁵¹² ODNB. Rudwick, M., 'Lyell, Sir Charles, first baronet (1797-1875)' (2006), pp.11. Geologist. Previously a lawyer. Professor of Geology at King's College London 1831-3, government adviser on scientific issues.

⁵¹³ Carpenter, p. 466.

⁵¹⁴ ODNB. Secord, J.A., 'Sedgwick, Adam (1785-1873)' (2007), pp.7. Geologist. Eloquent advocate of the moral basis of scientific enquiry, arguing for the place of geology within natural theology and opposing its misuse by scriptural literalists. However, he opposed attempts to explain the origin of new species through natural laws.

⁵¹⁵ Chadwick, Part 1, pp.558-65.

⁵¹⁶ ODNB. Desmond, A., Moore, J. & Browne, J., 'Darwin, Charles Robert (1809-1882)', (2009), pp.37. Naturalist, geologist and originator of the theory of natural selection.

and second, variations occur in all forms of life and are inherited: offspring are not all the same or exactly the same as their parents. These two phenomena act together in a sifting process termed Natural Selection, by which only those varieties that are better fitted to their environment will survive. This process over a long period of time accounts for gradual change in life forms and the appearance of new species, which is Organic Evolution.

Darwin abstained from the public controversy which resulted from his book. He preferred that T.H.Huxley,⁵¹⁷ a confrontational meritocratic secularist, who was also a distinguished scientist in his own right, should confront his critics. Huxley was the first to coin the term 'Darwinism', the aggressive defence of which earned him the sobriquet 'Darwin's Bulldog'. In fact, the deliberate clergy baiting by Huxley misrepresents Darwin who, as Endersby recently reminded us, wrote in a way that allowed his readers to believe in God.⁵¹⁸ The final sentence of the *Origin*, in the first edition states: 'There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one'. The word 'breathed' is reminiscent of the book of Genesis. A few months later, in the second edition, Darwin amended the sentence to read: 'originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms'. He kept the words 'by the Creator' in all the later editions. These words made it easier for readers to interpret the *Origin* as compatible with some form of religious faith. Many Victorians, not just Broad Churchmen, considered the *Origin of Species* as being compatible with Christian faith. However, strong opposition was also present, mainly from Evangelicals who argued for the literal truth of the Bible.

⁵¹⁷ ODNB.Desmond, A., 'Huxley, Thomas Henry (1825-1895)' (2009), pp.19. Biologist and science educator. Popularised Imperial College of Science in London. Opposed to the Oxbridge-Anglican power structure; invented the term 'agnostic'.

⁵¹⁸ Endersby J., 'Darwin Bicentenary' in *Sunday Telegraph, Seven Supplement*, pp.34-5, 8 Feb. 2009.

Wilberforce and Darwinism.

Samuel Wilberforce told Lyell that he thought Darwin's book 'the most unphilosophical he had ever read'.⁵¹⁹ Wilberforce soon had a public confrontation with Darwin's supporters at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which was being held at Oxford from 27 June to 3 July 1860.

A meeting of the Zoological section took place on Saturday morning, 30 June. Participants included Wilberforce, who was a vice-president of the British Association, Huxley, Hooker⁵²⁰ and other supporters of Darwinism. The audience, was said to be at least seven hundred people. Wilberforce contested the assertion that distinct changes could be bred permanently into any species. He is alleged to have asked Huxley whether the apes were on his grandfather's or grandmother's side. In reply Huxley is quoted by one biographer as saying that he would have preferred an ape for a grandfather than 'a man highly endowed by nature and possessed of great means of influence and yet who employs these faculties and that influence for the mere purpose of introducing ridicule into a grave scientific discussion.' If this was so, then it appears sanctimonious of Huxley after he had made some cheap jibes such as referring to 'extinguished clergymen' in the audience.⁵²¹ Desmond regards perceptions of the event as differing so wildly that talk of a 'victor' is ridiculous. Huxley believed himself to be 'the most popular man in Oxford for full four and twenty hours afterwards.' Hooker claimed that it was he himself who 'smashed' Wilberforce 'amid rounds of applause'. 'Amidst the chaos', Desmond continues, 'the

⁵¹⁹ Desmond, p.271.

⁵²⁰ *ODNB*. Endersby, J., 'Hooker, Sir Joseph Dalton (1817-1911)' (2008), pp.13. Friend and collaborator with Darwin from 1844. Director of Kew from 1865.

⁵²¹ Desmond, p.279.

combatants failed to see the jaunty Wilberforce leaving'.⁵²² He bore 'no malice', convinced that he had floored Huxley. Yet another version of events is described by Reginald Wilberforce in the biography of his father (published in 1881). Samuel Wilberforce

made a long and eloquent speech condemning Mr. Darwin's theory as unphilosophical and founded on fancy, and he denied that any one instance had been produced by Mr. Darwin which showed that the alleged change from one species to another had ever taken place...the Bishop said, that whatever certain people might believe, he would not look at the monkeys in the Zoological as connected with his ancestors, a remark that drew from a certain learned professor the retort, 'I would rather be descended from an ape than a bishop'.⁵²³

Lucas, in a recent critical review of the proceedings and their reporting, points out that the noisy conditions of the debate could well mean that not everyone could have correctly heard what had been said. There is a considerable amount of hearsay in the evidence. Some comments from an alleged witness were published forty years later. Two journalists who reported the proceedings of the British Association meeting did not regard the spat as being significant enough to mention. Lucas argues that a dilemma arises because of the paradigm shift contained in Darwin's theory. Either the theory exists as a hypothesis, in which case scientific data alone becomes important or the theory exists as a broader explanation for species at large, in which case extraneous facts become important. If the latter is true then Wilberforce's rhetoric becomes a justified means of persuasion. It could be that Huxley had chosen to answer with ridicule a challenge which had not been made, in the light of his known aversion to both amateurs and religion.⁵²⁴ Dennett, a biologist, sums up the

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p.280.

⁵²³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.450-1.

⁵²⁴ Lucas, J.R., 'Wilberforce and Huxley: A Legendary Encounter', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 2 (1979), pp.313-30.

matter of who said what to whom as: ‘This is a tale told so often in so many variations that we might count it a phylum of memes, not just a species’.⁵²⁵

Wilberforce was an interesting choice as reviewer of *Origin of Species* for the influential *Quarterly Review*. Not only was he a leading orthodox Christian but he was profoundly interested in natural history, being a member of the Zoological and Geological Societies, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society. His review, published anonymously in July 1860, could well have mirrored the views he expressed in the Oxford meeting in the previous month. He made three scientific points. First, that no evidence existed at the time for any new species developing. This rests on shaky ground. Secondly, that selective pressures had effects on species but did not cause a change of species; and thirdly, that the sterility found in hybrids was evidence for the stability of species. These last two points are true. Wilberforce then moved into the metaphysical:

Man’s derived supremacy over the earth, man’s power of articulate speech; man’s gift of reason; man’s freewill and responsibility... - all are equally and utterly irreconcilable with the degrading notion of the brute origin of him who was created in the image of God.⁵²⁶

Darwin himself accepted some of Wilberforce’s criticism. He wrote to Hooker in July 1860 describing Wilberforce’s article as ‘uncommonly clever; it picks out with skill all the most conjectural parts, and brings forward well all the difficulties.’ Writing to Lyell in August, Darwin admitted: ‘The Bishop makes a very telling case against me, by accumulating several instances where I speak doubtfully’.⁵²⁷ By contrast, Darwin’s support within Anglicanism came from advanced liberals. However, that support rested on the premises that Darwin did not intend to subvert Christian faith and that his work was based on genuine research. Darwin wrote *The*

⁵²⁵ Dennett, D.C. *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (London, 1996), p.336.

⁵²⁶ Wilberforce, S. (anon), *Quarterly Review*, 108, pp.225-64, July 1860.

⁵²⁷ Lucas, p.316.

Descent of Man in 1871. This showed that the human race had also shared in the long process of evolution, and that its physical form had been evolved from lower forms. Some of Darwin's hypotheses gained experimental proof in the later years of the nineteenth century, while it was only with advanced knowledge of genetics in the twentieth century that others were substantiated or proven.

Wilberforce and Huxley were simultaneously vice presidents of the Zoological Society, sitting together to solve financial and administrative problems. This quiet collaboration continued unheralded and generally unknown. Wilberforce attended council meetings, but not scientific sessions.⁵²⁸ When Wilberforce died, Huxley could not resist a cruelly sarcastic comment: 'Poor dear Sammy! His end has been all too tragic for his life. For once reality and his brains came into contact and the result was fatal'.⁵²⁹

Gladstone and Darwinism

In a letter to Lord Ormathwaite⁵³⁰ in 1872, Gladstone gave his views on Darwinism:

I have long ago seen there was something truly portentous in the avidity in which the age (as it is called) leapt to ulterior conclusions [at] which his first book was thought scarcely to hint, and which his physiological theory did not even require...I do not believe it is given to Mr Darwin...to sweep away that fabric of belief which has stood the handling of 1800 years and of stronger men perhaps than any now alive.⁵³¹

Having examined Evolution and Darwinism 'not as propositions of natural philosophy, but in their moral and speculative aspects,' Gladstone concluded in a

⁵²⁸ Desmond, p.302.

⁵²⁹ Desmond, p.431.

⁵³⁰ *ODNB*. Williams, W.R., 'Walsh, John Benn-, first Baron Ormathwaite (1798-1881)' (2004), pp.2. Politician. Tory MP and landowner. Staunch Anglican. Wrote on political reform and other subjects. Made a peer in 1868.

⁵³¹ Add MS 44541, 15 Jan.1872.

letter to Stanley Jevons⁵³² on 10 May 1874: ‘...that the doctrine of Evolution, if it be true, enhances in my judgement the proper idea of the greatness of God, for it makes every stage of creation a legible prophecy of all those which are to follow it’.⁵³³ According to Lathbury, Gladstone had an affection for the Book of Genesis akin to that he felt for Homer’s *Iliad*. He held that the account of the Creation in the first chapter had not been invalidated by the discoveries of geologists, and ‘he accepted this without the modifications which he found no difficulty in admitting as regards other parts of the narrative’.⁵³⁴

Darwin was a staunch Gladstonian Liberal. In 1876 he convened a demonstration against the massacre of Bulgarians by Turkish troops. Perhaps stimulated by this support, Gladstone visited Darwin at his home, Down House, in 1877. In 1881, Gladstone offered Darwin a trusteeship of the British Museum, as a minor show of state recognition, but Darwin turned it down.⁵³⁵

Writing to Lord Acton in 1889, Gladstone propounded on those he considered to be ‘Old Testament destructives’:

It is only on the constructive part of their work on which I feel tempted to judge; and I must own that it seems to me sadly wanting in the elements of rational probability. But outside of all this lies the question how far we may go past the destructives and their pickaxes and shovels, and deal with the great phenomenon of the Old Testament according to its contents, however put together, and its results actually achieved...⁵³⁶

By 1890, Gladstone had taken a harder line as a strong defender of moderate Christian Darwinism, perhaps a manifestation of intractable opinions coming with his own old age. In a tract entitled *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, he claimed

⁵³² ODNB. Collison Black, R.D., ‘Jevons, William Stanley (1835-1882)’ (2004), pp.13. Economist and philosopher of science.

⁵³³ Lathbury, Vol.2, pp.100-101, 10 May 1874.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁵³⁵ ODNB. Darwin, Charles.

⁵³⁶ Lathbury, Vol.2, p.119, undated.

that the Genesis days of the Creation accorded with modern palaeontology. Huxley gave a scientific response, including evidence that the Jurassic Archaeopteryx, the first bird, actually appeared after ‘creeping’ things. Huxley’s death in 1895 ended the dispute between the Godly leading politician of the age and the agnostic scientist.

3.5 Summary

During the early Victorian period there were conflicts and disputes within the Church of England brought about by various doctrinal differences. These included the rift between the High Church and Evangelicalism; the rise of Tractarianism and later Ritualism, as well as the Broad Church. Specific issues arose from the dispute between Maurice and Kings College London, the Colenso case and the controversy concerning Pusey. There was also the challenge of evolutionary theory to Christian belief. Both Wilberforce and Gladstone were drawn into the turbulence and disputes which embroiled the Church of England. Their opinions were generally in agreement, although there were some differences in emphasis.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

4.1 Introduction

By the second half of the nineteenth century the State had applied dictats on wide ranging aspects of Church organisation, making them part of the laws of the land. These measures were to the overall benefit of the Church, increasing its efficiency and establishing more uniformity of practice. Parliament had also applied laws which granted people of all creeds and beliefs the freedom to enter Parliament and to hold civil rank. The 1850s also saw other measures which continued the drive towards state neutrality in religion: the admission of dissenters to Oxbridge and changes in the divorce law. Owen Chadwick described the 1850s as being a time when the Church and State achieved ‘an uneasy equilibrium’ and when ‘the establishment was accepted as a practical and useful expression of Christian profession by the state and a public means to encourage Christian morality’.⁵³⁷

4.2 Wilberforce and Gladstone on the Relationship between Church and State

Gladstone, in 1838 at the age of twenty-eight, published *The State in its Relations with the Church*. This book ran to four editions despite its dense and discursive style. Gladstone contended that ‘the distinctive principle of the book was...that the State had a conscience’ which could discern between religious truth and error. The governors of any state had a duty to not only profess the religious truth which they see, but also to provide for the worship of God in public rites, and to encourage this truth and

⁵³⁷ Chadwick, Part 1, p.479.

worship by its laws.⁵³⁸ In *The State in its Relations with the Church* Gladstone desired ‘the full and effective action of the State for the promotion of religion; and yet more ardently, that general and free coincidence of my fellow-citizens in the principles of Catholic unity, through which alone, as I believe, the former object is obtainable’.⁵³⁹ Gladstone claimed not only the Anglican Church as being the sole source of truth and therefore defining its function in such a state, but also a High Church concept for that church by emphasising the role of the episcopate and apostolic succession. He also claimed for the Church of England an exclusive right to receive money from the state and was against there being a pluralistic state in religion and education.⁵⁴⁰ Gladstone’s belief that the State should only fund the Church of England was to be put to the test in 1845 over the Maynooth grant (see Chapter 5).

The State in its Relations with the Church received criticism at the time of publication. Lord Aberdeen told Gladstone: ‘No one reads your book and those who do don’t understand it’.⁵⁴¹ Lord Macaulay⁵⁴² thought that Gladstone’s ‘whole theory rests on this great fundamental proposition, that the propagation of religious truth is one of the principal ends of government, as government. If Mr Gladstone has not proved this proposition, his system vanishes at once’.⁵⁴³ Gladstone himself saw that the book was soon obsolete:

Scarcely had my work issued from the press when I became aware there was no party, no section of a party, no individual person probably in the House of Commons, who was prepared to act upon it. I found myself the last man to

⁵³⁸ Gladstone, W.E., *The State in its Relations with the Church* (London, 1838), p.403.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.403.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.312.

⁵⁴¹ Longford, E., ed. *Queen Victoria’s Journal* (London, 1968), p.182, 30 Jan.1845.

⁵⁴² ODNB. Thomas, W., ‘Thomas Babington Macaulay, Baron Macaulay (1800-1859)’ (2008), pp.13. Historian, essayist and poet, who considered it desirable to seek religious statistics.

⁵⁴³ Macaulay, T.B., *Edinburgh Review*, April 1839, p.255.

leave a sinking ship. Exclusive support of the established religion of the country...other than [by] sufferance, was an anachronism in time and place.⁵⁴⁴

In 1840 Gladstone published another massive volume, entitled *Church Principles Considered in their Results*. In this he reworked the ideas expressed in his earlier book. He considered the dominant theological stance of the eighteenth century was tainted with rationalism, which he regarded as being superficial. While he emphasised his own belief in the ancient Catholic teachings, Gladstone wanted the Church of England to be the axis for unification of the whole church in England.⁵⁴⁵ He soon realised that his idea that the Church of England, as the National Church, drawing Nonconformists and Catholics into its fold, was a false hope. Within the Anglican Church, the rise of rationalism and the defections of senior clergy to Rome had resulted in the Church 'bleeding at every pore'.⁵⁴⁶ Gladstone gradually moved from the idealism expressed in his two books towards a liberal, pluralistic view of public life. *Church Principles* was not well-received, being considered politically opinionated and theologically unsound.⁵⁴⁷

Gladstone sent Samuel Wilberforce a copy of *The State in Its Relation with the Church*. Wilberforce replied, approving the notion that all governments had a duty to support and defend what they believed to be religious truth.⁵⁴⁸ Wilberforce felt that the State must support the established Church, and although the State might tolerate dissent it should never encourage it.⁵⁴⁹ He agreed that the basis of establishment was the acknowledgement by the State that a particular religion was true, and the

⁵⁴⁴ Gladstone, W.E., *Gleanings* (London, 1879), Vol.7, p.115.

⁵⁴⁵ Bebbington (1993), pp.53-4.

⁵⁴⁶ Gladstone, *Gleanings*, Vol.7, pp.142-3.

⁵⁴⁷ Jenkins, p.59.

⁵⁴⁸ Add. MSS 44343, 15 May 1839.

⁵⁴⁹ *Chronicles of Convocation*, 17 February 1865, p.1983.

encouragement of ministers 'of that particular form to teach in the name of the State as well as of the Church'.⁵⁵⁰

4.3 State Interference and Judgements on Doctrinal Issues

During the mid-Victorian years, the relationship between Church and State was put to the test by the Hampden controversy (1847), the Gorham judgement (1848) and the Denison v Ditcher case (1854), issues in which both Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone became involved.

The Hampden Controversy

Renn Dickson Hampden⁵⁵¹, a tutor in Oriel College, was elected Bampton lecturer in 1832. His subject was *The Scholastic Philosophy considered in its relation to Christian Theology*. The lectures distinguished an original, simple, and scriptural gospel from the various dogmatic formulas introduced by Greek philosophical influence, and later by the early church fathers, which he considered as being no more than deductive statements infused with human imperfection.⁵⁵² The subject was complex and the lectures were dull.

Hampden was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1834. In February 1836 Lord Melbourne, the prime minister, obtained the royal assent for the appointment of Hampden to the Regius Chair of Divinity at Oxford. This appointment was politically motivated; Melbourne sought to appoint Whigs from the universities to high posts and there were very few Whigs in the mainly Tory Oxford. Strong opposition was aroused because of Hampden's alleged heresy. The archbishops lobbied Melbourne and made a personal representation to the King,

⁵⁵⁰ From a speech against Irish disestablishment, *The Times*, 6 May 1868, p.7.

⁵⁵¹ *ODNB*. Brent, R., 'Renn Dickson Hampden (1793-1868)' (2006), pp.8. Oxford theologian and Bishop of Hereford.

⁵⁵² Chadwick, Part 1, p.116.

Newman produced a pamphlet attacking Hampden's theological views, a petition from Oxford men was addressed to the King, and vitriolic attacks against Hampden were made in the press. The opposition at Oxford came from High Churchmen and Evangelicals. Hampden was already generally unpopular because he had advocated the admission of Dissenters to Oxford University and the abolition of subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles on matriculation. In addition, Tories were looking to embarrass the Whig government. Melbourne stood firm and the appointment went through. After Hampden's appointment to the Regius Chair, the university Convocation voting by a large majority in 1836 to publicly censure him. Samuel Wilberforce went to Oxford to register his protest against Hampden's appointment.⁵⁵³ Gladstone also supported the censure, but was unable to attend because of an accident. The effect of the controversy was to silence Hampden intellectually; he published nothing of major significance afterwards.

On 15 November 1847, Lord John Russell, the prime minister, recommended to Queen Victoria that Hampden be appointed to the vacant Bishopric of Hereford. Thirteen bishops, including Wilberforce, addressed a Remonstrance to the prime minister, stating that Oxford University had 'affirmed its want of confidence...in the soundness' of Hampden's doctrine. The bishops considered that if the appointment went through 'there is the greatest danger both of the interruption of the peace of the Church and of the disturbance of the confidence...that the clergy and laity of the Church should feel in every exercise of the Royal Supremacy, especially...the nomination to vacant sees'.⁵⁵⁴ The Remonstrance avoided making any judgement upon Hampden's orthodoxy or heresy, as this would have caused and prejudiced a judicial enquiry.

⁵⁵³ Meacham, p.148.

⁵⁵⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.433-4.

Wilberforce hoped to persuade Gladstone to lead lay opposition to Hampden's consecration. On 27 November 1847 he wrote to Gladstone: 'It is *your* business...I suppose the *continuous* act of publication of the Bampton lectures would suffice. It would be a relief for me to know that provision is made for resistance at that point if unhappily it becomes needful'.⁵⁵⁵ Gladstone replied two days later, stating that his hands were tied:

I have declined taking any active part in lay proceedings against Dr Hampden, first, because...they should originate with men who have never been called in question as opposed in theological party to Dr Hampden; secondly, because...this subject will find its way into Parliament, and, if I am a mover of out-of-doors public agitation, I shall cripple myself fatally there, where I think I have a strong ground of complaint on the part of the *University*.⁵⁵⁶ [Gladstone had been elected M P for Oxford University on 3 August 1847].

Russell sent a cool rejoinder to the bishops' Remonstrance, pointing out that many bishops had required certificates of attendance at Hampden's lectures from candidates for ordination, and that he could find nothing in the Remonstrance demonstrating a lack of confidence in the soundness of his doctrines. 'Should I withdraw my recommendation of Dr Hampden, which has been sanctioned by the Queen, I should virtually assent to the doctrine that a decree of the University of Oxford is a perpetual ban of exclusion against a clergyman of eminent learning and irreproachable life'.⁵⁵⁷ The problem for Wilberforce was that Hampden was beneficed in the diocese of Oxford, the vicarage of Ewelme being annexed to the Regius Professorship of Divinity. Wilberforce wrote to Russell on 11 December 1847, urging that Hampden should not be consecrated until he had cleared himself of the charge of 'unsoundness in the Truth' before a competent tribunal. He was sure that Hampden

⁵⁵⁵ BL, I, C205, 27 Nov. 1847.

⁵⁵⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol. I, p. 432.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 439-40.

himself would wish 'for the opportunity of proving himself to be as truly orthodox as we desire to find him.' The only alternative seemed to be a trial before the Court of Arches.⁵⁵⁸ Russell replied that the question of the unsoundness of Hampden's opinions would lead to interminable controversy 'to the detriment of the Church and of the Royal Supremacy'.⁵⁵⁹

A letter from Hampden to Lord John Russell appeared in *The Times* on 20 December. Ignoring the bishops' Remonstrance, Hampden blamed his prosecution on the Tractarians and professed his orthodoxy in vague terms.⁵⁶⁰ Wilberforce suspected that Hampden's letter to Russell had been commissioned by the prime minister as 'a *prescribed* publication in which he *was to ask* for a trial'.⁵⁶¹ In the meantime, five clergymen from the Oxford diocese proposed bringing a suit against Hampden in the Ecclesiastical Court of Arches. Wilberforce felt that he had no option but to sanction the suit. Writing to Hampden on 16 December, Wilberforce stressed that he was only performing 'the purely ministerial act' which he had 'not felt at liberty to refuse to perform'.⁵⁶² Hoping to retract the suit, Wilberforce wrote to Hampden the following day in an attempt to 'save the Church the injury of this struggle, and [Hampden] the pain and risk of its doubtful conclusion'. He proposed that Hampden subscribe to a set of eleven propositions, drawn up in consultation with the promoters of the suit, and set out in the letter. The propositions were a broad sweep across the doctrines of the Christian faith. The five clergymen were willing to withdraw their suit if Hampden withdrew his published Bampton lectures and his pamphlet *Observations on Dissent*. Wilberforce urged Hampden to do so, 'not thereby admitting either that you intended in them to assert any doctrine contrary to those which you have since

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.442-5.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.446-7.

⁵⁶⁰ *The Times*, 20 Dec.1847, p.5.

⁵⁶¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.452.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.454.

avowed'.⁵⁶³ Wilberforce sent Russell a copy of this letter. Russell replied: 'How is such a man to be interrogated upon articles framed not by the Church, but by one of its Bishops, as if he were himself a young student of divinity?' For Hampden to withdraw his Bampton lectures and *Observations* would require him to 'degrade himself in the eyes of all men for the sake of a mitre'.⁵⁶⁴ Hampden also replied the next day: he realised that the Bishop's intention was to be 'an instrument and messenger of peace' and appreciated his 'kindly spirit'. If this was not the case, Hampden would have taken the 'elementary tests' in Wilberforce's letter as an insult to one in his position. However, he answered 'yes' to all the questions.⁵⁶⁵

As the last edition of *Observations* was published in 1834, no charge could be brought under the Clergy Discipline Act with reference to anything done more than two years previously, so the pamphlet was now legally null and void. Further requests by Wilberforce that the Bampton lectures should be revised were met by Hampden's refusal to answer on legal advice. Wilberforce was therefore left high and dry. By this time, the Archbishop of Canterbury had strongly advised that the suit be dropped for the sake of the Church.⁵⁶⁶ Most of the bishops who were signatories of the Remonstrance were now ready to extricate themselves from their entanglement.⁵⁶⁷

On 28 December 1847, Wilberforce wrote to Hampden, stating that he had made 'a thorough and impartial examination of the Bampton lectures'. Wilberforce was now convinced 'that they do not justly warrant those suspicions of unsoundness to which they have given rise'.⁵⁶⁸ The suit was thereby dropped. Hampden was consecrated as Bishop of Hereford on 26 March 1848.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp. 455-7.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.459-60.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.460-3.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.468.

⁵⁶⁷ Meacham, p.158.

⁵⁶⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.482-8.

Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter criticised Wilberforce's handling of the case; in his view the suit should have gone through the Court of Arches. Instead, Wilberforce had allowed himself to be the judge, when the promoters had wanted the suit to continue, and 'having examined the case in your own library' had 'announced your conviction of the invalidity of that charge in the columns of a newspaper'. Phillpotts raised the question about Hampden: 'is he, or is he not, worthy of confidence as an exponent of Christian truth?' On the evidence of Hampden's statements, Phillpotts thought not.⁵⁶⁹

J.W.Burton, who admired Wilberforce and knew him well, described his behaviour in the Hampden affair:

He was rash, impetuous, unguarded; over-trustful, over-sanguine, over-generous; showed himself vacillating and 'infirm of purpose'; unduly self-reliant, and displaying a marvellous absence of judicial discretion...He showed himself incompetent to discern and to deal with the heretical teaching of one such as Hampden...his honesty of purpose and simplicity of intention cannot be overlooked; his integrity and perfect good faith cannot be impeached.⁵⁷⁰

There was widespread *schadenfreude* in regard to Samuel Wilberforce. The *Evangelical Record* remarked: '...of the probable effect of his conduct in the Hampden affair, upon His Lordship's general reputation, he is likely for the future, as in former times, to be best known by the designation of "Slippery Sam"'.⁵⁷¹ Wilberforce's participation in what was regarded as an assault on the Royal Prerogative certainly lost him favour at Court. He wrote to his friend Louisa Noel that 'it is painful to me to feel how probable it is that it will cost me that kindly trust of the Queen, which...I value highly'.⁵⁷² Wilberforce believed that if it had not been for the

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.489-93.

⁵⁷⁰ Burton, Vol.2, p.18.

⁵⁷¹ *The Record*, 3 Jan.1848, p.4.

⁵⁷² BL, II, F. 12 Dec.1847.

Hampden affair, he would have succeeded to Canterbury following the death of Archbishop Howley in February 1848.⁵⁷³

Gladstone referred to Hampden in a diary entry for 15 October 1847: 'Discussed this sad affair of Dr. Hampden's appointment with Badeley⁵⁷⁴ and Northcote.⁵⁷⁵ They are both against the admission but I do not think they had yet seen both sides of the question'.⁵⁷⁶ Gladstone wrote to Bishop Blomfield of London on 31 January 1848 that the Church 'ought not in conscience rest contented with such a state of things' and declared himself ready, if he could rely on Episcopal support, 'to secure some sort of legal check' on the Prime Minister's right to appoint bishops.⁵⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Gladstone's role in the original Hampden controversy continued to rankle with him. On 9 November 1856, he wrote to Bishop Hampden, expressing

The regret with which I now look back on a concurrence in a vote of the University of Oxford in the year 1836, condemnatory of some of your Lordship's publications. I did not take actual part in the vote... owing to an accident... For a good many years past I have found myself ill able to master books of an abstract character, and I am far from pretending to be competent at this time to form a judgement on the merits of any propositions then at issue. I have learned, indeed, that many things which, in the forward precipitancy of my youth, I should have condemned, are either in reality sound, or lie within the just limits of such discussion as especially befits a University. But that which brought back to my mind the injustice of which I had unconsciously been guilty in 1836 was my being called upon, as a member of the Council of King's College London, to concur in a measure similar in principle with respect to Mr. Maurice; that is to say, in a condemnation couched in general terms which did not really declare the point

⁵⁷³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.6.

⁵⁷⁴ *ODNB*. Courtney, W.P., 'Badeley, Edward Lowth (1803/4-1868)' (2008), Ecclesiastical lawyer. A devoted follower of J.H.Newman. Became a Roman Catholic in 1852.

⁵⁷⁵ *ODNB*. Rubinstein, W.D., 'Northcote, Stafford Henry, first Earl of Iddesleigh (1818-1887)' (2009), pp.14. Politician. Held several cabinet posts, but at the time was Gladstone's secretary.

⁵⁷⁶ *GD*, Vol. 3, 15 Oct.1847.

⁵⁷⁷ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.80-2, 31 Jan.1838.

of imputed guilt, and against which perfect innocence could have no defence [see pp.112-3 above]. I resisted to the best of my power, though ineffectually, the grievous wrong done to Mr Maurice. It was only...after mature reflection that I came to perceive the bearing of the case on that of 1836, and to find that by my resistance I had condemned myself. I then lamented very sincerely that I had not on that occasion...felt and acted in a different manner.⁵⁷⁸

The Gorham Judgement

Baptismal regeneration, which had exercised the conscience of William Gladstone in his youth and was eventually a prime factor in his transition from an Evangelical to a High Churchman (see Chapter 1 above), was a contentious issue within the Church from the early part of the nineteenth century. Evangelicals believed that personal profession leading to conversion was necessary for moral regeneration. High Churchmen claimed that a baptised infant was unconditionally regenerated and needed no subsequent regeneration. While they knew that the baptismal service of the English prayer book described the baptised infant as regenerate, many Evangelicals interpreted the liturgy in a charitable sense in that it expressed the hope that the infant would become regenerative in the future. The issue of baptismal regeneration came to a head in the 1840s in the Gorham case which threatened to split the whole of the Church of England.

George Cornelius Gorham (1787-1857)⁵⁷⁹ was a fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge. He was threatened with a refusal of ordination by the Bishop of Ely because of his staunch upholding of a version of the Evangelical doctrine of regeneration.⁵⁸⁰ From 1818 to 1827 he was curate at Clapham when, according to

⁵⁷⁸ Morley, Vol.1, pp.168.

⁵⁷⁹ *ODNB*. Wolfe, J., 'Gorham, George Cornelius (1787-1857)' (2004), pp.5.

⁵⁸⁰ Chadwick, Part 1, p.251.

Owen Chadwick, 'it was still the Zion of evangelical leaders'.⁵⁸¹ For the next twenty years Gorham held a series of mainly unbeneficed curacies. In February 1846 he was presented by the Tory Lord Chancellor, Lyndhurst, to the remote living of St. Just with Penwith in west Cornwall. Gorham soon came into conflict with the redoubtable High Church Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter.⁵⁸² Phillpotts was annoyed that Gorham referred to the Church of England as 'the national establishment' and was advertising for a curate 'free from Tractarian error'. Phillpotts insisted on interviewing the prospective curate and eventually licensed one who was Gorham's choice, but not before a trenchant exchange of letters indicated a breakdown in normal working relations.

In August 1847 Gorham accepted the Whig Lord Chancellor Cottenham's offer of the Crown incumbency of Brampford Speke near Exeter. This small agricultural parish was more to Gorham's liking than the remote Cornish living. However, Phillpotts had decided that Gorham held beliefs which were contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England. He refused to countersign his testimonial and summoned Gorham for a detailed examination of his doctrinal views. This interrogation lasted for five days in December 1847 and for a further three days in March 1848. Bishop Phillpotts then pronounced that Gorham was of unsound doctrine and that he would not appoint him. In April 1848 Gorham published an open letter protesting at the 'cruel exercise of Episcopal power, stretching beyond the boundaries of reason and decency'. He claimed that if the precedent were established a Tractarian bishop would be able to exclude from his diocese everyone whose views did not coincide with his own.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.251.

⁵⁸² *ODNB*. Burns, A., 'Phillpotts, Henry (1778-1869)' (2006), pp.11. Bishop of Exeter 1830-69.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.252.

In June 1848 Gorham issued a monition against Bishop Phillpotts in the Court of Arches. The questions were whether Gorham was a heretic, what authority possessed the right to determine whether he was a heretic or not, and did the Church have the right to exclude a heretical teacher from its pulpits?⁵⁸⁴ On 2 August 1849, the Dean of Arches, Sir Herbert Jenner-Fust⁵⁸⁵ delivered his judgement. Fust had no doubt that the infant was regenerated in baptism, Gorham had maintained a doctrine opposed to that of the Church of England and the bishop had shown sufficient reasons for his refusal. The case was dismissed with costs to the bishop.

Gorham appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Judicial Committee met on 11 December 1849. It consisted of six lawyers, only one of whom was trained in ecclesiastical law, the two archbishops and Bishop Blomfield of London. Only Blomfield and one of the lawyers found for Phillpotts. When the judgement was delivered on 9 March 1850 the committee had decided that Gorham's opinions were 'not contrary or repugnant to the declared doctrine of the Church of England as by law established, and that Mr Gorham ought not by reason of the doctrine held by him, to have been refused admission to the Vicarage of Bampford Speke'.⁵⁸⁶ The judgement strengthened the position of the Evangelicals in the Church of England but alarmed High Churchmen. Questions were raised by the judgement: Was the Church of England catholic if exponents of non-catholic doctrine were allowed to teach in its churches? Was the judgement a definition of Anglican doctrine or not? If it was a definition of Anglican doctrine, had it any authority over the

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.253.

⁵⁸⁵ *ODNB*. Boast, G.C., 'Sir Herbert Jenner-Fust (1778-1852)' (2007), pp.3. Judge. King's advocate general 1828-32. Principal of the arches and judge of the prerogative court of Canterbury, 1834 until his death. Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge from 1843.

⁵⁸⁶ Carpenter, S.C., *Church and People 1789-1889* (London, 1933), p.206.

Church of England? Was the pronouncement of the judicial committee actually relevant?⁵⁸⁷

Gorham was inducted at Brampford Speke on 10 August 1850 by commission, Phillpotts having threatened excommunication for anyone who would induct Gorham. The bishop continued to impose constraints on Gorham, who nevertheless threw himself energetically into his parochial duties before his death in 1857.

Immediately after the judicial committee had pronounced its judgement in March 1850, Bishop Phillpotts published a letter which he had sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury repudiating the judgement and accusing the Archbishop of being ‘a favourer and supporter of Mr Gorham’s heresies’.⁵⁸⁸ Phillpotts would withhold communion from Archbishop Sumner because he had abused the ‘high commission which he bears’. Samuel Wilberforce, writing on 26 March to his brother Robert considered that the letter ‘will damage our position considerably, showing a temper in Churchmen inconsistent, in the eyes of the Laity, with the exercise of dispassionate legislative, and still more, judicial functions’. Wilberforce took the sanguine view that ‘the judgement only affirms that the Evangelical body are not to be expelled’, and that he was ‘very anxious that in every move this *just* Supremacy of the Crown should be maintained...nothing could, I think, be more impolitic than to go against it’.⁵⁸⁹ He argued that the dispute was jurisdictional rather than doctrinal.

Writing to Sir Charles Anderson, Wilberforce stated: ‘Prevost⁵⁹⁰ does not feel the Church of England is compromised by this vile judgement’.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.262.

⁵⁸⁸ *ODNB*. Scotland, N., ‘John Bird Sumner (1780-1862)’ (2008), pp.7. An Evangelical, he was second cousin to Samuel Wilberforce. Bishop of Chester, 1828-48. Archbishop of Canterbury from 1848 until his death.

⁵⁸⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.38.

⁵⁹⁰ *ODNB*. Rigg, J.M., ‘Sir George Prevost, 2nd baronet (1804-1893)’ (2004), pp.2. Church of England clergyman. Perpetual curate at Stinchcombe, Glos. at the time. A lifelong friend of Samuel Wilberforce from their time at Oriel, Ardent Tractarian.

⁵⁹¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.41.

Wilberforce was fudging the issue by a convoluted argument which attempted to put a legal rather than doctrinal gloss on the case. He played down the divisions which had been brought about within the Church: 'We must feel that where, even with verbal differences, our great common truths are held implicitly, that there, far more than in mere verbal agreement, the true ground of unity is present'.⁵⁹² The question arises as to Wilberforce's true feelings about the judgement. While he describes it as being 'vile', there is an element of self delusion in that he stressed that the judgement was of a judicial nature rather than concerning a crucial point of religious doctrine. Or perhaps he was deliberately playing down the importance while fearing that the judgement would cause desertion to Rome by members of his family circle and others.

When the judgement of the Judicial Committee was still undelivered, Gladstone warned his wife that it 'may impose duties upon me which will separate for ever between my path of life, public or private, and that of all political parties. The issue is one going to the very root of all teaching and all life in the Church of England'.⁵⁹³ There can be little doubt that Gladstone was outraged by the legal judgment.

On the day that the judgement was announced, Gladstone spent the morning in conference with Hope, Manning, Robert and Henry Wilberforce (all of whom would defect to Rome), 'on the Gorham case and its probable consequences'.⁵⁹⁴ As a result, thirteen prominent clergymen with Tractarian leanings, including Manning, Robert and Henry Wilberforce, Pusey, Keble and Dodsworth, gave a stark series of resolutions on the outcome: the Church of England would be bound by the sentence unless it openly rejected the erroneous doctrine. The abandonment of one essential

⁵⁹² Wilberforce, S., *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at his Second Visitation*, 1851, p.48.

⁵⁹³ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.83.

⁵⁹⁴ *GD*, Vol.4, 8 March 1850.

doctrine destroyed the divine foundation of the Church and so separated it from the catholic body that it could no longer assure its members of the grace of sacraments and the remission of sins. The resolutions allowed only three possibilities of remedy: the restoration of Convocation, an act of Parliament giving legal force to the decisions of the collective episcopate, or a declaration by the bishops.⁵⁹⁵

On 14 March 1850 Gladstone met with Pusey, Hope, Keble and other prominent Tractarians, including Edward Badeley, the ecclesiastical lawyer who had advised Phillpotts.⁵⁹⁶ Badeley had already explained to Gladstone the position on the question of a prohibition on 10 March.⁵⁹⁷ Gladstone did not join the thirteen signatories to the resolutions, reflecting many years later that 'the declaration was liable to *many* interior objections'.⁵⁹⁸

On 10 March, Gladstone had drawn up a memorandum in which he asked some rhetorical questions about the relationship of the Church and State in regard to doctrine. He concluded that the duty of members of the Church of England to the State was 'peaceably to request liberty of conscience for the Church, and cheerfully to pay the price which the State, acting within its own sphere, may think fit to affix to that liberty'. Much of the problems caused by the judgement would have been avoided if the Church had reacted in this way. Churchmen must enquire whether the Church of England accepted or rejected the judgement. This could be best ascertained by reference to an Episcopal Synod, or some body corresponding and coextensive with the Upper House of Convocation. If the answer of the State to the prayer for liberty and conscience was unfavourable, the bishops must be moved to reject the judgement individually. This would clear the path of those members of the Church

⁵⁹⁵ 'Resolutions' in *The Times*, 20 March 1850.

⁵⁹⁶ *GD*, Vol.4, 14 March 1850.

⁵⁹⁷ *GD*, Vol.4, 12 March 1850.

⁵⁹⁸ Morley, Vol.1, p.380.

who did not intend to be parties to the surrender of her faith. Renunciation of communion with a body which having betrayed the Divine Word is the last step to be contemplated. However, this course cannot be entertained 'until all available means shall have been used for obtaining from the Church her say or no upon the judgement in the Gorham case'.⁵⁹⁹

Along with sixty-three eminent lay men, including English peers and members of parliament, Gladstone published a letter to the Bishop of London, stating that the judicial committee was unconstitutional as an organ for the decision of ecclesiastical questions. In Gladstone's own words, 'while it dealt little within theology, it was a more pregnant production than the declaration [i.e. the resolutions] and it went much nearer the mark'.⁶⁰⁰ Gladstone also encouraged Wilberforce to circulate an Episcopal declaration of adherence to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Wilberforce sent a draft to Archbishop Sumner who returned it with the comment that it would serve to limit the latitude sanctioned not merely by the judgement but by the Church.⁶⁰¹

In the aftermath of the Gorham judgement, on 3 June 1850 Bishop Blomfield introduced a bill in the House of Lords by which all cases of doctrine would be examined by the Upper House of Convocation, i.e. the bishops, and not by the Judicial Committee. The bill was rejected, most of the bishops abstaining and only four voting for it. Wilberforce strongly supported the bill, declaring it to be 'the only safe move at present'. He urged that 'purely spiritual questions ought to be left to purely spiritual judges'. He argued that the opposition to the bill proceeded from a fear that the Gorham judgement might be reversed if the bill were passed. 'If this were such an admirable judgement, surely there was no reason for such a fear. Unless there was some secret lurking belief that the judgement might be upset if we had a

⁵⁹⁹ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.86-7.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.381.

⁶⁰¹ BL, 1.C195, 28 April 1850.

good court, there would not have been this uneasiness'.⁶⁰² Gladstone was present during the rejection of Blomfield's bill: 'Heard the disastrous news of the division in the Lords 84:51'.⁶⁰³

On 23 July 1850 two and a half thousand High Churchmen convened in London and strongly repudiated the judgement. An appeal against the judgement was presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sumner, who refused to accept it on the grounds that he was being asked to reverse the sentence of a law court.⁶⁰⁴

Gladstone still hoped that the bishops would take the lead in attacking the Privy Council's constitutional position on Gorham. One year after the judgement, Bishop Phillpotts told Gladstone that the bishops 'had determined not to move in the Appeal matter this year. [Phillpotts] showed me a paper, very ruinous in my judgement, which they are meditating'.⁶⁰⁵

Gladstone visited Wilberforce at Cuddesdon on 20 January 1852 and stayed for two nights. Following much conversation between the two of them, Gladstone produced a joint memorandum (documented in full below) on the current State of the Church two years after the Gorham judgement :⁶⁰⁶

1. By the Gorham Judgement a foundation is laid for emptying of all their force the Articles of the Creed one by one, as public opinion, by successive stages, shall admit and encourage.
2. Also, for habitual assumption by the State of the office of interpreting the Creed, as well as the other documents of the Church.
3. A minority of the Bishops, including neither of the Archbishops, have protested, each for himself.
4. A minority of the clergy, including perhaps a fourth of the whole number, have protested also, some of them in dioceses or archdeaconries.

⁶⁰² *Hansard*, HL Deb. 3 June 1850. Vol.111, cc.640-2.

⁶⁰³ *GD*, Vol.4, 3 June 1850.

⁶⁰⁴ Chadwick, Part 1, p.268.

⁶⁰⁵ *GD*, Vol.4, 11 March 1851.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited in full from Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.134-5.

5. The Primate has instituted a Priest rejected by his Bishop for false doctrine, declaring that his office was ministerial and contending so to use and discharge it.
6. The Bishop has admitted among his clergy the Priest so instituted.
7. In 1850, after the judgement, a large portion of the Bishops strove for a measure which would have given to the Episcopate the power of deciding any point of doctrine involved in an appeal; opposed, however, by many of their number and not supported by the Primates.
8. In the more favourable of the two Houses of Parliament this Bill was rejected on a second reading by a majority.
9. The Session of 1851 passed away without the renewal of the Bill and without any definite announcement that it would be reintroduced, or that another measure of like tendency would be substituted for it, at a specified time. Its prospects, bad before, are greatly damaged by this delay.
10. There is not the smallest hope of the united action of the Bishops in seeking hereafter for any such measure; nor any great probability that even a bare majority of them can be got to concur in it.
11. Every rational principle of calculation leads to the conclusion that the tone of the Episcopal Bench with respect to dogma or authoritative teaching will decline, instead of rising, in the course of any period of future years.
12. The character of the English Episcopate and of the Church, as far as the latter is determined by the former, is to be read, not in the isolated acts of a minority and in part only of the personal acts of the majority but much more and mainly in the united acts of the whole body.
13. Of these there have been two, very solemn and considerable. One of them was the address on Papal Aggression with the prayer that temporal penalties might be enforced against the assumption of Diocesan titles and jurisdiction by Prelates of the Roman Church.
14. Another solemn and unite act was the Rubrical Declaration of last spring. The world sees that the English Episcopate cannot unite to defend an endangered doctrine of the Church – a doctrine endangered by an instrument that cuts at the whole foundation of doctrine; but can unite to check certain revivals of ceremonial, which are known to tend as a whole to bring our worship a step nearer to that of the Eastern as well as the Roman Church. The world will fairly infer that the Protestantism of the Church of England, as represented by its living Episcopate, has a rigid and an elastic side. Rigid towards the ancient Church, with which it is continuous and identical. Elastic towards the system which destroys doctrine by destroying authoritative teaching; and that both the particular question of Baptism and the claim of the Church, as against the civil power, to decide or interpret all doctrine, are, in the view of the Episcopate as a body, open questions properly so called.

In summary, Gladstone and Wilberforce feared that the Church was highly vulnerable to further threats to its doctrine; they deplored the lack of consistency and

lack of unity by the bishops in either defending the tenets of doctrine or giving leadership to the Church at national level.

The Denison v Ditcher Case

George Denison⁶⁰⁷, vicar of East Brent in Somerset and Archdeacon of Taunton, was a combative High Churchman with strong Tractarian leanings. Owen Chadwick described Denison as: 'A rugged personality, he stumped among the rocks of reality and arranged them into rows'.⁶⁰⁸ As examining chaplain to Bishop Bagot of Bath and Wells, Denison expected candidates presenting themselves for ordination to profess that the inward reality of the sacrament of Holy Communion was received by all, wicked as well as faithful. This was at odds with Article 29 of Anglican doctrine which declares that the wicked are not partakers of Christ.

One of the Wells ordinands was troubled by Denison's uncompromising views and sought the advice of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the ailing Richard Bagot.⁶⁰⁹ Due to his poor health, Bagot employed a retired colonial bishop, Spencer of Madras, for Episcopal duties in the diocese. Spencer, a Low Churchman, after fruitless arguments with Denison, resigned in May 1853. Denison resigned his examining chaplaincy pending enquiries and challenged Bishop Bagot to prosecute him. Denison then preached three sermons in Wells cathedral, between August 1853 and May 1854, affirming a real (though non-material) presence of Christ in the elements by virtue of consecration and prior to their reception. All communicants thus received the inward grace of the sacrament (though not necessarily its spiritual benefit) together with the

⁶⁰⁷ ODNB. Rigg, J.M., 'George Anthony Denison (1805-1896)' (2004) pp.4. Church of England clergyman. Ordained in 1832. Appointed vicar of East Brent in Somerset in 1845 and Archdeacon of Taunton in 1851.

⁶⁰⁸ Chadwick, Part 1, p.492.

⁶⁰⁹ ODNB. Nockles, P.B., 'Richard Bagot (1782-1854)' (2004), pp.5. Bishop of Oxford from 1829 until 1845, when he was appointed to Bath and Wells. A chronic invalid, his time in Oxford was turbulent when, although he was a High Churchman, he tried to control the excesses of J.H.Newman and the Tractarians.

outward sign. This contradiction of Article 29 seemed to encourage devotion to the sacramental species.

Early in 1854, the Evangelical vicar of the next parish, Joseph Ditcher of South Brent, asked Bishop Bagot to prosecute Denison. Behind Ditcher stood the Evangelical Alliance and Lord Shaftesbury, eager to contribute funds for legal fees.⁶¹⁰ Bagot refused to prosecute, fearing that Low Church views would be sanctioned by any legal adjudication. In February 1854, he wrote to Samuel Wilberforce, secretly committing the matter to him for the peace of the Church.⁶¹¹ On 8 February Wilberforce met a small group of advisors who included Robert Phillimore, a distinguished ecclesiastical lawyer who was Denison's brother in law and whose wife was a kinswoman of Bishop Bagot. From this meeting it was agreed that Wilberforce should write a letter for Denison to Ditcher. Samuel Wilberforce asked his brother, Robert, to use his influence on Denison and persuade him to prevent a trial.⁶¹² On 6 April 1854 Wilberforce wrote to his friend Arthur Gordon, who acted as secretary to his father Lord Aberdeen, the Prime Minister. He urged Gordon to acquaint his father with the matter so that he could impress upon Archbishop Sumner 'the ruin of stirring up a litigation on this mysterious subject'. Gordon reported on 16 April that Lord Aberdeen had 'pressed the Archbishop strongly *re* Denison'. Sumner was quoted as saying: 'Only let him do anything that looks like conciliation, and I will do what I can'.⁶¹³

Bishop Bagot was now dying. Samuel Wilberforce wrote a letter to Denison on 16 April in Bagot's name, stating that while some main points made by Denison in

⁶¹⁰ Chadwick, Part 1, pp.402-5.

⁶¹¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.234.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.235-6.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.237.

his sermons were a reaffirmation of Church of England formularies, he had fallen into error:

As to the *conditions* of [the] supernatural presence, with asserting the *reality* of which your Church has been wisely contented...you appear to me to have spoken as if you could reason concerning a supernatural presence as if it was subject to natural laws. Further you have been led into the error of requiring assent to your 'opinion' hereon, as if it were the dogmatic teaching of the Church.⁶¹⁴

Although Denison's opinion was erroneous it was not censured by the Church and did not require an authoritative decision in the ecclesiastical courts. However, he had to 'abstain for the future from all attempts to enforce the acceptance of [his] own opinion as the condition of holding faithfully the doctrine of the Real Presence itself'.⁶¹⁵

Bagot died on 15 May 1854. Ditcher appealed to Bagot's successor, Lord Auckland. Auckland refused. Ditcher discovered that as Denison's living was in the patronage of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, a clause protected the incumbent from a bishop-patron by allotting the duty of proceeding to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Ditcher applied to Sumner. Under a clause which was actually intended for Denison's protection, Sumner appointed a commission of enquiry consisting of five Low Churchmen. Denison applied to the court of the Queen's Bench to stop the commissioners. The Queen's Bench refused.

Gladstone corresponded with Wilberforce in November 1854, seeking to define the issues in the Denison case in the midst of ambiguities that were present at the time. The conclusion reached by Gladstone was that Article 28, which declares that 'the body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Lord's Supper after an heavenly

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.239.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.240.

and spiritual manner' gives 'a simple, nonspeculative belief in the blessed words of institution'.⁶¹⁶

Sumner's commission of enquiry sat from 3 January 1855 and found unanimously that there was a *prima facie* case to answer. Ditcher applied to Sumner for a prosecution, but this was refused. In August 1855 Ditcher applied to the court of Queen's Bench to compel the Archbishop to hear the case against Denison. The mandamus was confirmed in April 1856. Sumner was therefore forced to proceed by law. The case was eventually heard in Bath on 22 July 1856, Sumner appearing with two anti-Tractarian assessors from the clergy and Stephen Lushington who provided a legal input. On 12 August 1856 the court found Denison's doctrine repugnant to Articles 28 and 29 and gave him until 1 October to recant. Denison declined to recant and was deprived on 22 October.

On 13 August Gladstone wrote to Lord Aberdeen informing him that Denison had been condemned 'not only as to some shades of his doctrine, which may be thought to belong to him individually, but likewise as to his profession of those principles which imply belief in the Eucharist as a substantive reality'. Gladstone pointed out that 'the Eucharist, in the character of a touching spectacle and emblem, requires no *belief*, and admits of none'. Gladstone was vehement that: 'If belief in the Eucharist as a reality is proscribed by law in the Church of England, everything that I hold dear in life shall be given and devoted to the oversetting and tearing in pieces such law, whatever consequences, of whatever kind, may follow'.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.371, 27 Nov.1854.

⁶¹⁷ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.373, 29 Oct.1856.

Dennison then appealed to the Court of Arches. The Dean of Arches, Sir John Dodson,⁶¹⁸ considered it nonsense to appeal from Archbishop of Canterbury to Archbishop of Canterbury and refused to hear the appeal. Denison then successfully applied to the Queen's Bench for a mandamus to compel Dodson to hear the appeal.

On 23 April 1857 Dodson found that since the prosecution must begin within two years of the offence the whole prosecution was invalid and the case against Denison fell. Nearly three years had elapsed between the sermons in 1853 and the prosecution in 1856.

Edward Carpenter described the case as a Gilbertian legal battle.⁶¹⁹ The failure of the prosecution favoured High Churchmen. The Archbishop showed prejudice and dithering. The Evangelicals lost some face because of their persistent prosecution and because Dissenting money was behind an attack on an Anglican clergyman.

4.4 The Religious Census of 1851 and its Implications

In 1851, for the first and only time, an enquiry into religion was included as part of the official decennial census of the population in Great Britain. This ecclesiastical census was the personal initiative of George Graham⁶²⁰, the Registrar General. A young lawyer, Horace Mann⁶²¹, was given the task of organising the census. A schedule was completed by the minister of each place of worship, asking for the number of buildings used for public worship, the number of sittings provided in them

⁶¹⁸ *ODNB*. Boase, G.C., 'Sir John Dodson (1780-1858)' (2004), pp.2. Judge. From 1852 until its abolition was judge of the prerogative court of Canterbury until its abolition in 1857, and was Dean of the Arches court until his death.

⁶¹⁹ Carpenter, E., p.304.

⁶²⁰ *ODNB*. Higgs, E., 'George Graham (1801-1888)' (2008), pp.4. Civil servant. His elder brother, Sir James Graham, who was then Peel's Home Secretary, appointed him in 1842 as head of the General Register Office (GRO), i.e. registrar general for births, marriages and deaths, with responsibilities for censuses. He made the GRO an effective and efficient organisation.

⁶²¹ *ODNB*. Curthoys, M.C., 'Horace Mann (1823-1917)' (2004), pp.3. Civil servant. Appointed assistant commissioner of the census office in 1850. Registrar of the Civil Service Commission 1855-1875, the secretary of the Commission 1875-87.

and the number of persons present at each of the services held on Sunday, 30 March 1851 in England and Wales.

Wilberforce presented a petition in the House of Lords three days before the census, warning that the returns would be unreliable and incomplete. He suggested in some vague way they would be used to the disadvantage of the Establishment, and was inclined to advise the clergy not to answer the questions.⁶²² Wilberforce realised that a national survey would reveal many deficiencies of the Established Church. By making excuses in advance he was preparing for the worst.⁶²³ Mann contended that while the data was incomplete and possibly subject to some inaccuracies, his report gave an authentic picture of the country's religious practice.⁶²⁴

Mann's report, published in January 1854⁶²⁵, showed that 38% of the population did not attend church. Of those who did attend a place of worship, 51% were Anglicans and 44% were Dissenters.⁶²⁶ The census confirmed that Protestant Dissent had emerged as an ecclesiastical force of almost equivalent and, in some parts of the country, especially in large towns and in Wales, greater influence than the Church of England. This provided statistical fuel to the campaign of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control.⁶²⁷ Mann drew further conclusions from his figures. The labouring classes disliked social distinctions in churches, including the division into respectable pews and free seats, and regarded religion as a middle class propriety or luxury. They suspected that the churches were indifferent to their poverty. The working class often lived in such physical squalor

⁶²² *Hansard*, HL Deb, 27 March 1851, Vol.115, cc.630-2.

⁶²³ Soloway, R.A., *Prelates and People* (London: 1969), pp.434-5.

⁶²⁴ Mann, H., *The Times*, 11 July 1860.

⁶²⁵ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales...* (London, 1854).

⁶²⁶ The report showed that an estimated 7,261,032 out of a total population of 17,927,609 had attended church or chapel : Church of England: 5,292,551, Roman Catholics 383,630, Main Protestant Dissenting churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist): 4,536,264.

⁶²⁷ Field, C.D., 'The 1851 Religious Census of Great Britain: a Bibliographical Guide for Local and Regional Historians', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 27 (1997), pp.194-217.

that they could not rise to spiritual matters. They had become, in Mann's phrase, 'unconscious secularists'. In addition, the number of ministers of religion of all denominations was too few to reach them. In large towns it was physically impossible for one and a half million people to attend church or chapel, even if they wished to, and that about two thousand new churches and chapels were needed. However, half the seats in churches within slum areas were empty.⁶²⁸

The Nonconformist attempts to exploit the census as quantitative evidence of the weakness of the Church of England triggered an Anglican counter-attack. This was led by Wilberforce in the House of Lords debate on the census in July 1854. Wilberforce not only criticised the inaccuracies of the census but also charged that the Nonconformists had exaggerated their attendance. This did not surprise him, since 'many of their ministers were not often in the same rank of life as the clergy of the Established Church'.⁶²⁹ Wilberforce moved for the returns of the census to be laid before the House, but withdrew this motion when advised by Lord Granville⁶³⁰ that to do so would breach the undertakings of confidentiality given in 1851.⁶³¹

While the views of Gladstone on the 1851 census remain obscure, he held strong views that a lack of discipline had kept the Church from exercising an influence over the country. In a letter to Wilberforce in 1844 he had complained that 'men are told to do right and if they do right it is all well with them; but those who do wrong are practically treated in a manner so nearly identical that the reality of the distinction is scarcely traced and vice loses a great part of the ordained means of correction, and

⁶²⁸ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales.*

⁶²⁹ *Hansard*, HL Deb 11 July 1854. Vol.135, c.25.

⁶³⁰ *ODNB*. Sanders, L.C., 'George Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Granville (1815-1891)' (2008), pp.3. Politician. Paymaster-general, 1847-51, Foreign Secretary, 1851-2, Lord President of the Council, 1852-4. Became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in June 1854. Later became Colonial Secretary and Foreign Secretary in Gladstone's governments.

⁶³¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 11 July-12 Aug. 1854. Vol.135, cc.23-33.

faith of support'. Methodism and Dissent had drawn 'nearly all that is respectable and spiritually solid in their strength'.⁶³²

4.5 The Problem of the Dissenters

Although the 1851 census showed that 44% of church attendances were at Dissenting services, this figure included many denominations. Dissenters were basically Evangelical with various modifications. There were marked differences in regional distribution and social stratification between the various branches of Dissent, with three main categories of Dissenters.⁶³³ Firstly, there were the Congregationalists, Baptists, Unitarians and Quakers who originated in the civil wars of the seventeenth century and in the persecutions that followed the Restoration. All included a significant element of wealthy business and professional men and were strongly Liberal in politics. Second, the Methodists, Moravians and Lady Huntington's Connection derived from the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, which gradually led to new denominations outside the established church. Methodists were socially heterogeneous but by the turn of the century were moving in a strongly Liberal direction. The third category, consisting of Presbyterians, mainly immigrants from Scotland and Ulster, and the Brethren, were generally apolitical.⁶³⁴

John Angell James (1785-1859), a Congregational minister in Birmingham, summarised the principles of Dissenting belief: Firstly, 'the Holy Scriptures are the sole authority and sufficient rule in matters of religion, whether relating to doctrine, duty, or church government. The Bible...alone is the religion of Dissenters.' Second, 'that it is every man's indefeasible right, and incumbent duty, to form and to follow

⁶³² Add. MS 44343, 29 Dec.1844.

⁶³³ McLeod, H., *Religion and Society in England 1850-1915* (London, 1996), p.28.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.30-1.

his own opinion of the meaning of the word of God'.⁶³⁵ Despite these common denominators, there were significant differences between the various Dissenting churches and sometimes bitter internal disputes within them.

The constitutional reforms of 1828 to 1835, particularly the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 which had excluded Dissenters from town councils, the Reform Act of 1832 and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, gave the Dissenters hope that the age of Anglican privilege and Dissenting disabilities may be drawing to a close. Dissenters required an effective and cohesive political organisation to exploit the political opportunities offered by these reforms. However, in the late 1830s Dissenting politics were in disarray, weakened by internal conflict.⁶³⁶

A more unified approach by Dissenters followed the founding of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, or Liberation Society for short, by Edward Miall in 1853.⁶³⁷ The Society explained its aim thus: 'The dominant force in favour of disestablishment is a religious force; in putting to an end the political ascendancy of a particular Church, care will be taken...to do nothing that would be prejudicial to the religious interests of the nation'.⁶³⁸ The Liberation Society was also committed to opening up Oxford and Cambridge universities to Dissenters, the abolition of church rates and religious oaths for public office and the introduction of a nondenominational state education system. As David Bebbington has shown, the Liberation Society was a formative influence in the emergence of the Gladstonian Liberal party, Dissenters comprising an important element in the election of

⁶³⁵ Moore, J.R., 'The principles of Dissent: England and Scotland', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, Vol.3, *Sources* (Manchester, 1988), pp.132-3.

⁶³⁶ Thompson, D., *England in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed (Harmondsworth, 1978), pp.211-3.

⁶³⁷ ODNB. Bebbington, D.W., 'Edward Miall (1809-1881)' (2006), pp.6. Politician, journalist, and Congregational minister.

⁶³⁸ Norman, E., 'Church and State since 1800' in Gilley, S. and Sheils, W.J., (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain* (Oxford, 1994), p.278.

Gladstone's reformist government in 1868.⁶³⁹ John Morley, writing in 1873, encapsulated a widely held view about Dissent: 'Its creeds may be narrow, its spirit contentious, its discipline unscriptural, its ritual bleak, its votaries plebeian...Dissent is not picturesque, but it possesses an heroic political record'.⁶⁴⁰

As Bishop of Oxford, Wilberforce summarised his perception of Dissenters:

Some of them deny that Our Lord Jesus Christ is God; some of them renounce altogether Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some of them deny Baptism to infants; some of them deny that the Christian Ministry comes from Christ and say that anyone can be or make a Minister; some of them say that *they* are as much inspired as the Holy Apostles; some of them say that the Elect of God cannot Sin, some of them say that they themselves are perfect; some deny Our Lord's atonement and the like.⁶⁴¹

Gladstone was welcomed as an ally and political leader by leading dissidents such as the Congregationalist Henry Allon,⁶⁴² who wrote to Gladstone on 15 April 1878:

The kind of intercourse you have kindly permitted with nonconformists has helped more consciously to identify them with movements of national life. Their confidence in you has made them amenable to your lead in respect of methods and movements needing the guidance of political insight and experience.⁶⁴³

Gladstone's liberal feelings had led to political expediency without compromising his personal religious beliefs.

In 1863, Gladstone took Wilberforce to task for his refusal to support the Qualification for Office Abolition Bill. Writing to Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury, Wilberforce described how:

⁶³⁹ Bebbington (1993), p.79.

⁶⁴⁰ John Morley, *Fortnightly Review*, August & September, 1873.

⁶⁴¹ *Letterbook*, Letter to Rev. W.T.Eyre, 23 Jan.1851, p.208.

⁶⁴² *ODNB*. Kaye, E., 'Henry Allon (1818-1892)' (2004), pp.2. Congregational minister and leader. Minister of Union Chapel, Islington, London, for almost 50 years. Chairman of Congregational Union in 1864 and 1881.

⁶⁴³ Morley, Vol.2, p.135

Gladstone had settled on me quite fiercely to secure my support of Hadfield's bill for doing away the declaration of Mayors that they will not use their municipal offices against the Church. Gladstone says it is no security; it is a mere ban fixed on Dissenters. 'If you do not give up this, you will give up nothing'. I replied: 'Why should we give it up? We gain nothing instead. It is no stigma; it is simply saying that there is an Established Church, and whilst, in the fullness of our tolerance, we admit all Dissenters to all places, we make them assert that they will not use their municipal position against the Established Church'. Then I said 'all the real supporters of the Church will look upon it as desertion.'⁶⁴⁴

Gladstone pointed out in a letter on 15 March 1863 that no one was obliged to take this declaration. He countered Wilberforce's argument that men may wish to escape the declaration in order that they may 'carry their municipal paraphernalia in state to Dissenting chapels.' They could do so already and taking the oath would not prevent them from doing so.⁶⁴⁵ Wilberforce replied on 19 March that the Dissenters were not seeking freedom for themselves but the abolition of the Establishment.⁶⁴⁶ Gladstone responded on 21 March by suggesting that by upholding the Establishment Wilberforce was in fact weakening the position of the Church. It was an Act which was not a concession to the Dissenters at the expense of the Church, but would actually do good to the Church as well as soothing Dissenters.⁶⁴⁷

Gladstone pointed out that an analogous situation was provided by the Indemnity Act which was passed with dispensation. In reply on 29 March, Wilberforce accepted Gladstone's point that the effect of the Indemnity Act was to deprive the affirmation of any practical weight, that he forcibly felt the weight of Gladstone's argument and agreed 'that we should not obtrude needlessly our objections on the sore places of Dissenters.' He was now 'ready not to oppose the bill' if he 'could bring the Church

⁶⁴⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.77.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.77-8.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.79-80.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.80-84.

party, and especially the bishops, to act together...as there is in this no real security [risk] to the Establishment...[and] as Dissenters feel it a burden on their consciences'. However, 'I do not think it would be right for me to support this Bill against a general Church opposition'.⁶⁴⁸ The bill did not become law until 1865. Wilberforce did not vote when the bill came before the House of Lords, his diary recording on 26 June 1865: 'House of Lords on Oaths, paired to dine with the Bishop of Gloucester, and back one minute too late – vexed thereat'.⁶⁴⁹

Wilberforce and Gladstone were in agreement on the issue of church rates, a long-standing bone of contention between Anglicans and Dissenters. Dissenters were outraged by imprisonments arising from refusal to pay church rates, the tax paid by parishioners to maintain a parish church in repair. The rate was a local tax and had to be voted by a parish meeting in which every citizen had a vote. On 1 February 1855, Wilberforce met with Gladstone and recorded in his diary, 'As to Church rates, we agreed entirely in view. The government plan was to be for providing for the maintenance of the fabric and public worship in parishes where a church rate was refused'.⁶⁵⁰ This proposition also offended Dissenters who saw this as national taxation subsidising the Established Church. Writing to Sir Stafford Northcote in August 1865, Gladstone contended that it would be very doubtful whether the principle of establishment would not be more secure if church rates were abolished, but he could not say if establishment would be safe in England after abolition. Gladstone was exasperated by the attack upon the Establishment in England: 'That *some* of the anti-Church Rate people look upon this measure as a blow to the Establishment only show me their feebleness and their Brobdingnagian estimate of

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp.84-5.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.85.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.271-2.

Lilliputian proceedings'.⁶⁵¹ A liberal minded politician he may have been, but Gladstone nevertheless held some radicals in contempt.

The matter of church rates grumbled on for decades, with the bishops rejecting the abolition of compulsory church rates, including a bill in 1867. On 26 March 1868, Wilberforce noted in his diary: 'Gladstone came to talk about Church Rate Bill; as earnest as ever on his clause for making non-payer non-voter'.⁶⁵² Wilberforce urged acquiescence in Gladstone's Church Rates Bill in the House of Lords. He had always believed in the principle of church rates and would continue to do so. While advocating the present measure, which at least retained the rates, he told the House that 'the question to be decided was whether their lordships would wait to see church rates abolished altogether, or whether they would accept some such provision as was offered in the present bill'.⁶⁵³

The bishops eventually realised that a large section of public opinion was against them and finally accepted a bill which abolished compulsory rates but maintained the old vestry system intact, with powers to vote a voluntary rate for Church members. The main areas affected would be small country parishes, because in towns compulsory rating had usually been dropped in practice because it had become impossible to enforce.⁶⁵⁴

4.6 The Rise of Roman Catholicism and Papal Aggression

The growth of the Roman Catholic Church was perceived by many Anglicans as a threat to the Established Church by the mid-nineteenth century. Interlinking issues which gave rise to this distrust included the influx of Irish immigrants, the movement

⁶⁵¹ Lathbury, Vol.1, pp.142-3, 9 Aug.1865.

⁶⁵² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.242.

⁶⁵³ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 23 April 1868, Vol.191, cc. 1134-36.

⁶⁵⁴ Crowther, p.150.

of Papal Aggression, as well as the leanings of some leading Tractarians towards the Roman Church. The perceptions of Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone were coloured by defections to Rome among family and friends (see Chapter 2).

The estimated Roman Catholic population of England and Wales on Census Sunday in 1851 was 679,067.⁶⁵⁵ This number included hundreds of thousands of Irish Catholic migrants who had fled from Ireland in the wake of the Great Famine of 1845-52 when the potato crop - the staple diet of the Irish population - had been stricken by disease.⁶⁵⁶ The 1851 census recorded that 733,866 people born in Ireland were living in mainland Britain, where they made up 3% of the population.⁶⁵⁷ The immigrant Irish were at the bottom of society and struggled to survive in the face of grinding poverty. Initially, many of these Irish Catholic migrants faced shortages of priests and churches⁶⁵⁸, and had little time, energy or material resources to devote to the Church.⁶⁵⁹ During the second half of the nineteenth century the Roman Catholic Church gradually established its presence in the immigrant districts, integrating the Irish-born and their descendants into the Catholic parishes and associated institutions which included schools and orphanages. To some extent the Church was a force for separation of the Irish areas from the community at large.

Roman Catholics were subjected to prejudice in Victorian England.⁶⁶⁰ Evangelical Protestantism saw Roman Catholicism as idolatrous, as teaching a false

⁶⁵⁵ Hughes, P., 'The English Catholics in 1850', in *The English Catholics 1850-1950*, ed. Beck, G.A. (London, 1950), p.45.

⁶⁵⁶ Kitson Clark, G., *The Making of Victorian England* (London: 1965), p.75.

⁶⁵⁷ Swift, R., *Irish Migrants in Britain 1815-1914: A Documentary History* (Cork, 2002), p.31. For further details of the Irish Catholic migrant in Victorian Britain see especially Swift, R. & Gilley, S. eds., *The Irish in Victorian Britain, 1815-1939* (Dublin, 1989) & MacRaild, D., *The Irish in Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke & London, 1999).

⁶⁵⁸ Kitson Clark, p.75.

⁶⁵⁹ McLeod, pp.41-2.

⁶⁶⁰ See: Wheeler, M., *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth English Culture* (Cambridge, 2006) and Paz, D.G., *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, 1992).

faith in the possibility of human beings saving themselves through good works. ‘No Popery’ sometimes included the claim that the Pope was the anti-Christ. A second criticism of Roman Catholicism, rooted in religious and political liberalism, stressed the authoritarian structure of the Roman Catholic Church and the denial of freedom of conscience. Roman Catholics were perceived as owing allegiance to a foreigner (the Pope) rather than to the Crown. Anti-Catholicism was compounded by anti-Irish prejudice, despite a substantial minority of Irish immigrants being staunchly Protestant.⁶⁶¹

On 29 September 1850, Pope Pius IX announced from Rome that the Catholic hierarchy was to be restored in England. This defined the start of Papal Aggression.⁶⁶² Before then England and Wales had been divided into eight districts, each under a vicar-apostolic in Episcopal orders. Nicholas Wiseman⁶⁶³, who was currently vicar-apostolic of the London district and president of Oscott College near Birmingham, was appointed as Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

Wiseman announced his appointment along with the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in a pastoral letter from Rome. He declared that ‘Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament, from which its light has long vanished’. His triumphalist and rhetorical language sounded less a message to faithful Roman Catholics than a challenge to the English people.⁶⁶⁴ Wiseman continued to aggressively promote Roman Catholicism and to mock the Anglican Church in sermons and in print.

⁶⁶¹ McLeod, pp.43-4.

⁶⁶² Papal Aggression is well described by Owen Chadwick in *The Victorian Church* 3rd edn.(London, 1971), Part 1, p.271-309.

⁶⁶³ ODNB. Schiefen, R.J., ‘Wiseman, Nicholas Patrick Stephen (1802-1865)’ (2004), pp.9. Appointed Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in 1850.

⁶⁶⁴ Chadwick, Part 1, p.292.

In November 1850 the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, received a letter from Bishop Maltby of Durham, lamenting the insolent and insidious nature of the Pope's aggression. Russell agreed with the bishop. He considered that Papal Aggression challenged the Royal Supremacy and the Established Church by implying that Rome held authority over England. Russell did not fear this 'outward attack', for a nation that had enjoyed religious freedom for so long had nothing to fear from the Pope. He thought that a greater threat came from the Tractarians who were leading their flocks to Roman mummeries of superstition'.⁶⁶⁵ When these letters were published they stirred public protests against Roman Catholics and Tractarians. Wiseman had also caused public resentment against Tractarians and Anglo-Catholics by his open attempts to woo them into the Roman Catholic fold.

Samuel Wilberforce suspected that Russell wanted to inflame resentment against the Tractarians. He wrote to his brother Robert on 19 November 1850 that 'Lord John will do nothing but try, like a cunning little fellow he is, to puzzle the scent of his own trail, by turning out Tractarianism as his bagged fox'.⁶⁶⁶

A victim of the anti-ritualist backlash was W. J. E. Bennett,⁶⁶⁷ the incumbent at the parish church of St Paul's Knightsbridge. Bennett persuaded wealthy members of his congregation at St Paul's (which included Lord John Russell) to subscribe to a new church in Pimlico, then a poor part of the parish. This church, St Barnabas, was consecrated on 11 June 1850 and was hailed at the time as the most complete architectural expression of Anglo-Catholic ideals yet built. Rioting occurred outside St Barnabas in November 1850. Bishop Blomfield of London demanded Bennett's resignation. Bennett resigned the incumbency on 4 December 1850 and then

⁶⁶⁵ Paz, p.10.

⁶⁶⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.55.

⁶⁶⁷ ODNB. Davie, P., 'Bennett, William James Early (1804-1886)', pp.5, Church of England clergyman and author.

published a *Letter to Lord John Russell* in which he revealed Russell's long connection with St Paul's Knightsbridge and making the Durham letter responsible for the outrages at St Barnabas. Bennett was firmly opposed to the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and against any Roman Catholic presence in England at all.⁶⁶⁸

Wilberforce, in a letter to Gladstone, explained that the Bishop of London had accepted Bennett's resignation:

On principle avowed by Mr Bennett of...his right to introduce any ceremony which had ever been used in the Church and which was not especially condemned and forbidden at our Reformation. This principle I esteem to be faulty, believing that our system was intended to be affirmative and not simply negative, and that it does not become individual clergymen to restore from ante-Restoration times whatever was not...forbidden.

Nevertheless, Wilberforce earnestly desired that the Bishop of London should 'do his utmost to restore Bennett to usefulness in the Church'. Wilberforce told Gladstone he knew of no better way 'of securing that good result than that you, for whose judgement I know that he sustains a profound respect, should yourself write fully to him on the subject'.⁶⁶⁹

Bennett was subsequently appointed to the vicarage of Frome in Somerset, where he remained for the rest of his long life.

Russell's Ecclesiastical Titles Bill came before Parliament in 1851. During the second reading, on 25 March, Gladstone made an impassioned speech emphasising how ludicrous it was to attempt to meet the spiritual dangers of the Church by temporal legislation of a penal character.⁶⁷⁰ Wilberforce supported the Bill on the grounds that the establishment of a Roman hierarchy meant 'the introduction of false

⁶⁶⁸ James, D., *Victorian Reformation: The Fight over Idolatry in the Church of England* (Oxford, 2009).

⁶⁶⁹ Add. MS 44343, 26 Dec.1851.

⁶⁷⁰ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 25 March 1851, Vol.115, cc.580-97.

and fallacious religious doctrine into the land, and secondly, because it is a systematic intrusion of a rival Church, into the ground already occupied by the Protestant Church of England as by law established'. But he found it hard to believe that the Bill could achieve anything worthwhile: 'The real purpose of a Roman hierarchy was not the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, but the conversion of souls, and this Bill would do little by itself to slow that unhappy process'.⁶⁷¹

The Act proved to be a dead letter. It did little to assuage anti-Roman fears. The clamour against Tractarians and Ritualists continued unabated. Wilberforce outlined to Gladstone the moderate course he felt compelled to take: 'to show unmistakably that I do not believe Romanizing doctrine to be a necessary accompaniment of Anglican teaching that a man may now be...a believer in the Sacramental System, and yet...against Rome'.⁶⁷²

The Act was eventually repealed during Gladstone's government in 1870. No one was ever prosecuted under it.

4.7 Convocation

Convocation, the ancient parliament of the clergy, began as the two Provincial Synods of Canterbury and York. The synods consisted of upper houses of bishops and lower houses of archdeacons, deans and proctors. Convocation had been part of the Constitution of the realm since the time of Edward the First. In 1534, Henry the Eighth forbade Convocation to pass canons without royal assent. Convocation was prorogued by the Crown in 1717 following bitter hostilities between the bishops who were Whigs and the clergy in the lower houses who were Tories. From that time Convocation was summoned by Royal Writ at the beginning of each new parliament,

⁶⁷¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 29 July 1851, Vol.118, cc.167-76.

⁶⁷² Add. MS 44343, 27 May 1851.

but transacted no business except to draw up and submit a Loyal Address to the Throne. This inactivity was despite Canon 139 of 1603 which declared that ‘the sacred Synod of this nation’ was ‘the true Church of England by representation’.⁶⁷³

The Tractarians regarded Convocation as the historic instrument of spiritual power which would prevent the Church’s government falling into secular hands. After the Hampden and Gorham crises, High Churchmen thought the State was no longer fit to have control of spiritual affairs, and demanded the revival of Convocation as an active debating and legislating body.⁶⁷⁴

The movement for revival was led by Samuel Wilberforce and Henry Hoare, a wealthy banker. These two, who were friends from childhood, founded a society for the revival of Convocation in 1850. Most members of the lower houses of the Convocations of Canterbury and York favoured the revival, but both archbishops were hostile. Evangelical and liberal clergy feared that the Ritualists might gain too much power in the Convocations, and use them to turn the Church into an authoritarian institution with Romish practices. However, the Papal Aggression of 1850 brought more people to favour the historical Anglican institutions against Rome.

In the early 1850s Wilberforce, as described by Owen Chadwick, ‘slowly became an indispensable captain. By his energy and force and mastery of the subject he raised himself in the favour of high churchmen until at last they owned him as their spokesman’.⁶⁷⁵

In its 1851 and 1852 sessions Convocation took the forward step of receiving petitions and holding debates. After the 1851 session, Lord Redesdale formally moved in the House of Lords for the revival of Convocation. Both Wilberforce and the Bishop of London supported this motion, which was agreed to; but it was opposed

⁶⁷³ Carpenter, S. C. pp.267-8.

⁶⁷⁴ Crowther, p.152.

⁶⁷⁵ Chadwick, Part 1, p.313.

by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the grounds that if Convocation debated, dissent and controversy would be sure to arise.⁶⁷⁶ Wilberforce in 1852 sought legal opinion as to whether Convocation could legally debate, as long as they did not prepare canons. It was decreed that this was the case.

Wilberforce consulted with Gladstone as to what subjects should be brought before Convocation. Replying on 12 September 1852, Gladstone considered that the proposed motion, on Clerical Discipline, was 'exceedingly well chosen; it presented a broad ground to friends, yet a narrow front to foes, it was perfect'.⁶⁷⁷ Wilberforce wrote back to Gladstone six days later expressing his view that a Commission should be appointed to enquire and report on the alterations needed to make the Convocations of Canterbury and York act together so as to be 'the Church of England by representation'. The Commission's report should then be presented to the Convocation of Canterbury 'with her licence to debate and act thereupon'.⁶⁷⁸ Replying on 3 October 1852, Gladstone posed the question: 'Why should the Reform of Convocation be considered by a Commission rather than by the two Houses themselves acting in concert by delegations, joint committee or whatever be most in form?' Gladstone did not like the idea that 'the assembled clergy should give their countenance to a form of proceeding which is at the very best but half constitutional and which may become in circumstances not remotely dangerous'. The settlement of the question of Church Rates was, in Gladstone's belief, an 'indispensable preliminary...to real progress in regard to Church government'.⁶⁷⁹

At its meeting in November 1852 Convocation appointed committees, one on clerical discipline and the other on grievances. Archbishop Sumner wished to

⁶⁷⁶ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 11 July 1851, Vol.118, cc.554-5.

⁶⁷⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.143.

⁶⁷⁸ Add. MS 44343, 18 Sept.1852.

⁶⁷⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.144.

prorogue Convocation. However, Wilberforce was informed by the attorney general that the archbishop could only prorogue with the consent of his suffragan bishops. The Prime Minister, Lord Derby, did not wish to alienate either the pro or anti-Convocation parties. His weak Tory government fell in December 1852 and was replaced by a Whig-Peelite coalition under Lord Aberdeen. Using the Prime Minister's son, Arthur Gordon, as an intermediary, Wilberforce found that Lord Aberdeen had no desire that Convocation should meet. The prime minister told Arthur: 'It must be stopped...Do you think I am going to tolerate them by a side-wind because the archbishop is a poor, vain, weak, silly creature whom they can bully with impunity?'⁶⁸⁰ The cabinet discussed whether they ought to appoint a commission of enquiry into the whole constitutional question,⁶⁸¹ but eventually Aberdeen agreed that Convocation should go forward and struck a bargain that the Crown would refrain from proroguing if Convocation confined its debates to a single day.

When the Houses of Convocation met on 16 February 1853 they debated a number of subjects. While there was no state opening of Parliament on that day, there was the pretext of an address to the Queen. There was no pretext to the next meeting in February 1854. However, Lord Aberdeen had become more amenable and conceded a debate of one day or even two if the business warranted. The opponents of Convocation were now powerless. In Chadwick's summary: 'The power of meeting regularly though briefly, debating a little, and appointing committees to report and advise, had been conceded'.⁶⁸² Convocation sat for three days in February 1855.

By 1861 Convocation was an important source of Church opinion. Inevitably there were conflicts between Church parties and personalities. The conservative position of the upper house was defended by Wilberforce and Bishop Hamilton of

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.161.

⁶⁸¹ Chadwick, Part 1, p.319.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, p.321.

Salisbury, often against Thirlwall and Tait. In the lower house there were frequently bitter disagreements between Dean Stanley and Archdeacon Denison.⁶⁸³

In 1860 Convocation managed to change a canon, as Wilberforce explained in a letter to Gladstone on 24 February. The proposed change allowed parents to act as sponsors of their children at baptism, in response to petitions from rank and file clergy. Wilberforce considered that the rigid adherence to three godparents, as expressed in the original canon, prevented the baptism of many children and drove many to Dissenters.⁶⁸⁴ This change did not have to go through parliament but required royal assent, which was duly given.

Nothing was done for the present about lay representation in Convocation. In a letter to Wilberforce on 1 January 1854 Gladstone gave his view that: 'No form of church government that does not distinctly and fully provide for the expression of the voice of the laity...would satisfy the needs of the church of England. But in my own mind...I am against all premature, all rapid conclusions'.⁶⁸⁵ Wilberforce favoured involving the laity in the Church, for instance acting as lay visitors, to give a social mix which would counter the exclusive Establishment bias of the Anglican Church.⁶⁸⁶ However, Wilberforce did not envisage a role for the laity in Convocation. He explained this to Henry Hoare in 1855: 'Into this question we decline entering; not because we undervalue its importance...but because we conceive our business to reform the actual convocation which is essentially a clerical body, not to make a new one which it would be if it included laity'.⁶⁸⁷ Eventually the Houses of laymen were created which became the legal and constitutional Church Assembly in 1919.

⁶⁸³ Crowther, p.153.

⁶⁸⁴ Add. MS 44344, 24 Feb.1860.

⁶⁸⁵ Morley, Vol.2, p.163.

⁶⁸⁶ Wilberforce, S., *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Surrey at the Fourth Visitation* (1844), pp. 28-9.

⁶⁸⁷ *Letterbook*, Letter to H.Hoare, 28 Aug.1855.

Gladstone had fully welcomed and supported the restoration of Convocation.⁶⁸⁸ He had moved a long way from his view expressed in *The State in its Relations with the Church* that there should be close identification between Church and State. He was now urging a separate voice for the Church. On 12 August 1865, writing to Sir Walter James, he opined that 'Erastianism, which has lived and outlived its time, is at length decaying and will soon be like to die'.⁶⁸⁹

4.8 Summary

As a young man Gladstone regarded the Established Church as having exclusive rights to financial and moral support from the State. He soon realised this was impossible. The State applied dictats in the Hampden Controversy, the Gorham Judgement, even on issues of dogma. The Religious Census of 1851 showed that Dissenters were almost as large an element of the church going public as were Anglicans. Gladstone, through his liberal attitudes became a political figurehead for Dissenters, and was sometimes at odds with the more conservative Wilberforce. In the 1850s, Papal Aggression was seen as another threat to the Church of England and the threat from Erastianism and Rome stimulated the re-establishment of Convocation, mainly due to Wilberforce's unstinting efforts, which were supported by Gladstone.

⁶⁸⁸ Bebbington, p.71.

⁶⁸⁹ Lathbury, Vol.1, p.143, 12 Aug.1865.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARLIAMENTARY THEMES AND ISSUES

5.1 Introduction

In their parliamentary roles, both Samuel Wilberforce, as a Bishop sitting in the House of Lords, and William Gladstone as a Member of Parliament and as Prime Minister during the last four and a half years of Wilberforce's life, were confronted by and responded to a range of religious issues. They shared a mutual interest in the promotion of ecclesiastical legislation relating to the regulation of the Anglican clergy and public worship, colonial Church government, and the Church of Ireland. They also held a common interest in contemporary social and moral questions which were of intrinsic interest to the Church of England, two selected examples of which, namely elementary education provision and divorce, are examined here. This chapter explores the nature and extent of their co-operation in parliament with reference to these specific themes.

By the mid part of the nineteenth century it was clear that a close symbiosis between Church and State was being undermined by progressive secularisation. The Bishops were still part of the House of Lords. Nevertheless, the rift was widening, with constant reminders to the Church of its difficult position.⁶⁹⁰ Church Bills emanating from the ecclesiastical authorities had to have the support of Ministers of

⁶⁹⁰ Carpenter, S. C., p.345.

the Crown and had to run the gauntlet of both Houses. This was sometimes achieved, often with difficulty, and sometimes was not even attempted.⁶⁹¹

In his charge as Bishop of Oxford in 1848, Samuel Wilberforce defined to his clergy the function of a bishop: 'It appertains to their office, as instructors and guides of thought and opinion, that they should closely watch all measures which tend to promote the general welfare, and above all, the morals of the people'.⁶⁹² This is consistent with his activity in education and divorce legislation; as well as other important social issues Wilberforce became involved in and which will not be considered in detail here, such as repeal of the Corn Laws and support of the Ten Hours Movement.

By contrast, Gladstone looked for more personal qualifications in a bishop:

Piety. Learning (sacred). Eloquence. Administrative power. Faithful allegiance to the Church and to the church of England. Activity. Tact and courtesy in dealings with men: knowledge of the world. Accomplishments and literature. An equitable spirit. Faculty of working with his brother bishops. Some legal habit of mind. Circumspection. Courage. Maturity of age and character. Corporal vigour. Liberal sentiments on public affairs. A representative character with reference to shades of opinion fairly allowable in the Church.⁶⁹³

Samuel Wilberforce's performance in the House of Lords suggests that he generally measured up well against these tasks and criteria, and indeed worked closely with Gladstone on several issues.

⁶⁹¹ For instance, although Letters of Business had been granted to Convocation in February 1872 to revise the rubrics of the Prayer Book, there was considerable reluctance to submit a draft for discussion and amendment in Parliament, and nothing was done. A Revised Lectionary had been approved by Convocation in 1871 and had been sanctioned by Act of Parliament. However, the only actual Prayer Book Revision was that of the Shortened Services (Act of Uniformity Amendment) Act of 1872. This came from the Report of the Ritual Commission, rather than from Convocation, and missed an opportunity because it only provided for a shortening of services on weekdays.

⁶⁹² Wilberforce, S., *A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at his primary Visitation* (1848), pp.12-14.

⁶⁹³ Morley, Vol.2, p.431.

5.2 Colonial Church Government

Samuel Wilberforce had inherited a commitment to missionary activity from his father. He conducted missions for the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in 1858 and 1859, frequently preached on behalf of various missionary schemes and urged the establishment of missionary bishoprics.⁶⁹⁴ David Bebbington has observed that Gladstone's colonial policy sought consistently to encourage self financing alongside self government.⁶⁹⁵ His support for Wilberforce in asserting the independence of the Colonial Church was in line with this thinking.

A raft of proposals concerning management issues in the Colonial Church was brought before Parliament in the 1850s. On 30 June 1847, a meeting of friends of the Colonial Church was held the day before four Colonial Bishops were consecrated in Westminster Abbey. The chief speakers at the meeting were Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone, both of whom supported the notion of increasing the number of colonial bishops and their right to independent action.⁶⁹⁶

At a meeting of the Colonial Bishoprics Fund in 1853, Wilberforce espoused the idea of a 'missionary bishop', claiming that both the Scripture and tradition taught that a mission should always be led by a bishop *ab initio* in a pioneering role rather than being viewed as an administrator of a church already planted. Most missionary societies were Low Church and were suspicious that High Church bishops would practise and preach their High Church doctrine to the heathen. The evangelical Church Missionary Society wanted constitutional checks and balances on the powers of colonial and missionary bishops, with the Church/State input welding new bishops

⁶⁹⁴ Rowley, H., ed. *Speeches on Missions by Samuel Wilberforce* (London, 1874).

⁶⁹⁵ Bebbington (1993), p.166.

⁶⁹⁶ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, pp.394-5.

into the legal framework. This would include such ultimate recourse as legal appeal on ecclesiastical questions to the Privy Council and its judicial committee.⁶⁹⁷ In 1853, Wilberforce undertook to pilot a Missionary Bishops Bill through Parliament.⁶⁹⁸ 'The Archbishop left it very much to me to arrange', he confided to Arthur Gordon.⁶⁹⁹ The Bill aimed at allowing the Church to head missions to the heathen, with English bishops who had been consecrated in England, without the commission of the Queen. At the same time the Colonial Church Regulation Bill, which would have allowed bishops, clergy, and laity to meet in synods to pass ecclesiastical legislation in the colonies was launched.⁷⁰⁰ A letter widely circulated by Sir James Stephen, Under Secretary for the Colonies, prior to the debate on the Missionary Bishops Bill, led to Wilberforce sending Stephen a philippic in which he accused him of misrepresenting the bill, together with a thinly veiled hint that Stephen's brother in law, Henry Venn, 'the autocrat of the Church Missionary Society', feared that missionary bishops would 'supersede Church missionary committees and his own secret power'.⁷⁰¹ Wilberforce explained in a letter to *The Guardian* that an 'unknown member unconnected with the [Colonial Church Government] bill moved the first reading, and fixed the second reading and managed to bring it on prematurely' when the two nominated sponsors of the bill were absent from London.⁷⁰²

Gladstone supported both bills.⁷⁰³ ⁷⁰⁴ In a letter to Wilberforce on 22 July, he considered that another sticking point was the attitude of the Solicitor General,

⁶⁹⁷ Yates, T., 'The Idea of a "Missionary Bishop" in the Spread of the Anglican Communion in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, Vol.2 (2004), pp.52-61.

⁶⁹⁸ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 25 July 1853, Vol.129, cc.743.

⁶⁹⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.195.

⁷⁰⁰ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 21 July 1853, Vol.129, cc.512-33.

⁷⁰¹ Letterbook, pp.271-3, Letter to Sir James Stephen, 13 Aug.1853.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.273-4, Letter to the Editor of *The Guardian*, 13 Aug.1853.

⁷⁰³ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 21 July 1853, Vol.129, cc.521-3.

⁷⁰⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 2 August 1853, Vol.129, cc.1211-14.

Bethell, who ‘cannot bear the idea of giving a *quasi* legal sanction and authority to the synod’.⁷⁰⁵ Both bills passed through the House of Lords but were defeated in the House of Commons.

The Missionary Bishops Bill, now entitled the Bishops for Heathen Countries Bill, was again raised in 1861 by Wilberforce, but was opposed by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Westbury, who considered the legislation as unnecessary and an attempt to destroy the supremacy of the Crown. Wilberforce challenged the inaccuracy of some of the Lord Chancellor’s statements.⁷⁰⁶ On the advice of Lord Derby, the bill was withdrawn.⁷⁰⁷ Writing to Gladstone on 7 July 1861, Wilberforce had defined the opposition as being the Evangelical Lord Shaftesbury and the Church Missionary Society.⁷⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in November, he was able to report to Gladstone that the Archbishop of Canterbury had responded to a request from the King of Hawaii by agreeing to consecrate a Bishop of Honolulu.⁷⁰⁹

In 1853 Wilberforce, reminding the House of Lords that ‘the British legislature had given Canadians the power to settle their own affairs’, spoke for the motion to allow the Canadian Parliament the right to dispose of its Church Reserves as it wished via the Clergy Reserves (Canada) Bill, despite opposition from Canadian Churchmen. These Reserves amounted to half a million acres. Wilberforce argued that, although he would like to see the endowments of the Church remain intact, the British Government had already granted the Canadian parliament power to act on its own. Under these circumstances Britain could only ‘use all legitimate means, all affectionate influences, all wise advice...but I will be guilty of no act of injustice’.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.190-1.

⁷⁰⁶ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 11 July 1862, Vol.129, cc.223-34.

⁷⁰⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.53.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.37.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.38.

⁷¹⁰ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 28 Feb 1853, Vol.124, cc.719-27.

This line of reasoning was entirely consistent with Gladstone's own views on colonial self government. Gladstone robustly defended Wilberforce's speech during the second reading of the bill in the House of Commons and

was glad that a bishop of the Church of England was able, from the strength of his own mind, his keen sense of justice and the courage with which he defended what he believed to be right, to come forward and declare himself a supporter of a bill like this, notwithstanding the obloquy which, especially among his profession, might attach itself to such support.⁷¹¹

Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone on 7 March: 'It is worthwhile to be often so attacked to be so defended by you'.⁷¹²

5.3 The Regulation of the Anglican Clergy and Public Worship

In 1835, Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, created an Ecclesiastical Commission to stimulate radical reform of the Church of England. This included assessing the finances of the Church and moving money to where it was most needed. Gladstone, a junior minister in Peel's government, welcomed the move to reform and, in the view of Bebbington, this was one reason he chose to model himself on Peel as a Christian statesman.⁷¹³ With his deep commitment to the Anglican Church, Gladstone was closely involved with, and often stimulated, legislation to bring about its reform.

The Clerical Subscription Act of 1865

Gladstone had for many years felt strongly about Subscription, the assent required at Ordination. In December 1844 Gladstone wrote to Wilberforce describing Subscription as 'a clumsy and incomprehensible device...the attempt in this age to bind it in the consciences of men will recoil violently and by the aid of the common

⁷¹¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 4 March 1853, Vol.124, cc.1139-52.

⁷¹² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.180.

⁷¹³ Bebbington (1993), pp.15-16.

foe will destroy the whole system of Subscriptions'.⁷¹⁴ Priests and deacons had to swear on two ancient oaths to give their unfeigned assent to every word of the Prayer Book and Articles, and to accept that the doctrines in them had 'nothing contrary' to the word of God.⁷¹⁵ A Royal Commission, of which Wilberforce was a member, was set up to consider the question of Subscription. In 1865, the report of the Commission, approved by Convocation, recommended that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy be taken before the ordination ceremony and not during. Ordinands were now asked to say that the doctrines were 'agreeable' to the Word of God, and that they would use the form of service prescribed, and no other, 'except so far....as shall be ordered by lawful authority'.⁷¹⁶ The changes were mild enough not to upset most orthodox churchmen and the bill passed through both Houses, with strong support from Gladstone.⁷¹⁷

The Church Discipline Bill of 1856

Following the Gorham controversy (see Chapter 4 above), there was much debate over the role and constitution of the Privy Council in ecclesiastical and doctrinal matters. Wilberforce wanted the Church to pronounce on doctrine, as was seen in his strivings for Convocation, while still recognising the supremacy of the State. He sought some kind of middle ground when speaking on the Church Discipline Bill of 1856, which had been introduced by the Lord Chancellor as an amendment to the Clergy Discipline Act. Wilberforce declared at the second reading that he was ready to leave 'the entire settlement of every case of doctrine, as far as it concerned an individual, to the Privy Council'. He argued that archbishops and bishops should not mix with laymen as judges, as they did at that time, and that it was far better that the

⁷¹⁴ Add. MS 44343, 29 Dec.1844.

⁷¹⁵ Crowther, p.148.

⁷¹⁶ Report of the Royal Commission on Clerical Subscription, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1865, Vol.15 (3), pp.42-3.

⁷¹⁷ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 14 June 1865, Vol.180, cc.218-23.

Council sent them cases to hear and to respond to, ‘deciding not whether AB was guilty or not guilty, but whether certain doctrine was or was not in accordance with the formularies of the Church of England...It would keep the doctrines of the Church from being tampered with by judgement given in individual cases’. ⁷¹⁸ The Bill was opposed by the archbishops and all the bishops except the Irish bishops, and was rejected. Wilberforce reasoned that a bill which dealt with Episcopal authority should have been submitted to the bishops before being brought to the House of Lords. ⁷¹⁹

The following year, when the Bill was being redrafted, Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone on 31 October, reiterating how impossible it was to blend ‘into a real working Court such entirely heterogeneous matter as Bishops and lawyers’. The Privy Council should, he argued, decide cases as lawyers, calling upon ecclesiastical experts if they felt the need. ‘Let the Privy Council advise the Queen about us as it would about a Wesleyan or a Roman Trust deed’. ⁷²⁰ Gladstone replied on 2 November 1857: ‘It seems to me vain in logic, and even demoralising in practice, to contend that such sentences may so pass and take effect and yet not in any real sense commit the Church’. The Church, he argued, must retain its membership of the Court of Appeal. Without defenders in court to declare the truth of Anglican doctrine, the Church would approximate ‘to the Erastian theory that the business of an Establishment is to teach all sorts of doctrines and to provide Christian Ordinances by way of comfort for all sorts of people, to be used at their own option’. For the bishops to be part of the Court would ‘do much for the ecclesiastical principles of our Constitution, but still more for the healthiness of our moral tone’. ⁷²¹

⁷¹⁸ *Hansard*. HL Deb, 21 April 1856, Vol.141, cc.1318-22.

⁷¹⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.351.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.352.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.353-4.

Although a bill for amending the Clergy Discipline Act was dropped in 1857 because of differences in opinion between the bishops,⁷²² the issue was finally resolved in July 1873 when, as part of the Judicature Act, ecclesiastical members were excluded from the Supreme Court of Appeal. By the time it became law Samuel Wilberforce was dead.

Clerical Resignation Acts

The Episcopal Resignation Act of 1869 allowed Bishops to resign for reasons of age or infirmity. The first such case was Bishop Sumner of Winchester, whose retirement preceded Samuel Wilberforce's translation to Winchester. A ticklish problem was the size of the retiring bishops' pension, which was based on diocesan income. Bishops in poorer dioceses would be disadvantaged if the pension was based on a fixed percentage of income. Gladstone resolved this by introducing a variable percentage based on income, giving a more equitable arrangement.⁷²³

Early in 1870, Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone with proposals for a Benefices Resignation Bill which he wished to bring to the House of Lords and seeking Gladstone's approval.⁷²⁴ Gladstone replied on 24 January recommending that the Bill should be initiated by the bishops and not the Government. It should closely follow the framework of the Episcopal Resignation Act, 'only with more securities on account of the much greater risk of abuse.' Gladstone considered that it would not be possible to tie the Government in the first instance to the details of a Bill, and recommended that Wilberforce 'had better invite Convocation to adopt an outline of scheme rather than a ready made measure'.⁷²⁵

⁷²² *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.356.

⁷²³ Add. MS 44540, Letter from Gladstone to Archbishop Tait, 6 June 1871.

⁷²⁴ Add. MS 44345, 22 Jan. 1870.

⁷²⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.341.

Wilberforce replied that having sent the draft to every bishop, he had received a consensus that it should be introduced with no formidable amendments. Gladstone, on 17 May 1870 recommended to Wilberforce that ‘if you feel confidence that the difficulties of detail inherent in the subject have been satisfactorily dealt with, I know no reason why you should not try it in the House of Lords’.⁷²⁶ In January 1871, Gladstone assured the Archbishop of Canterbury that ‘the Bishop of Winchester...will have my best assistance in any attempt to extricate the Bill from controversy and to pass it in some form generally approved’.⁷²⁷ The aim of the Bill was to enable clergymen who had become incapacitated, and no longer able to perform their work, to resign their benefices with the consent of their Bishop and Archbishop. They would continue to receive one third of the profits of the living.⁷²⁸

Gladstone wrote to Archbishop Tait later in 1871, stating that he had ‘told the Bishop of Winchester that we ought to have a Resignation Bill for Deans and Canons. It appears it might be framed in analogy to the Episcopal Bill: only perhaps requiring the assent of the Bishop’.⁷²⁹ Wilberforce advised Gladstone on this intended bill. Provision was made for minor canons in the proposed legislation because the hierarchical structure of cathedrals made them independent of the Chapter.⁷³⁰

The Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874

Lord Shaftesbury introduced a bill in 1867 prohibiting all ritualistic innovation. In a letter to Gladstone on 10 March 1867, Wilberforce accused Shaftesbury of ‘throwing over the rights of congregations, the discretion of Bishops, and the liberty of the Church for all future expansion. It was *exactly the* idea for his cramped, puritanical, prosecuting mind’. Wilberforce described how the evangelical

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.342.

⁷²⁷ *GD*, Vol.7, 10 Jan.1870.

⁷²⁸ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 14 June 1870, Vol.202, c.3.

⁷²⁹ *GD*, Vol.8, 5 Nov.1871.

⁷³⁰ Add. MS 44345, 19 Jan.1872.

Archbishop of York and Northern bishops supported the bill, while he and two others were against it. Wilberforce urged Gladstone to speak to the Archbishop of Canterbury, because: 'I believe that if anything can save us from the terrible end to which pusillanimity is driving us, it will be your influence with him'.⁷³¹ Gladstone replied the following day, stating that he had

met the Archbishop and learned from him that the Bishops intended to take up a bill of Shaftesbury's...From me this communication had the worst reception I could possibly give it...I think it idle to suppose that a Bill such as this could pass the House of Commons without raising many and large questions. I am afraid it would throw me into a very anti-Episcopal position...I agree in the views of it which you express.⁷³²

After a meeting with both archbishops and the Bishop of London, Gladstone felt that he 'had left them in the mind to drop the Bill and propose a commission'.⁷³³ The bill was eventually defeated in the Lords on an amendment by the Archbishop. Wilberforce wrote to Gladstone with some relief on 12 March: 'I thank God that you have been enabled to stay this counsel of fear which threatened destruction. I agree entirely with every word you say'.⁷³⁴

Lord Derby proposed the establishment of a Ritual Commission to consider recent innovations and to recommend changes which might be wisely and safely adopted concerning only the rubric prescribing the ornaments of the Church in public worship. Wilberforce was a member of the commission. The first report dealt solely with the use of vestments and, according to an entry in his diary for 19 August 1867, Wilberforce describes 'a long debate on a draft report I had drawn up...substantially

⁷³¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol. 3, p.205-6.

⁷³² This is not quite accurate. The bill which the Archbishop proposed to introduce was drawn by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, and was called 'an Act for removing doubts as to the mode of conducting Public Worship': footnote, Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.208.

⁷³³ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.208-9.

⁷³⁴ Add. MS 44345, 12 March 1867.

adopted'.⁷³⁵ The report mentions that 'it is expedient to restrain' the use of vestments, rather than prohibit.⁷³⁶ In a letter to his son Ernest, Wilberforce explained why vestments should not be made illegal: '1. This would have altered the standing of the English Church. 2. It would have prevented any use of them where the people do not object. 3. It would have stood in the way of any gradual return to a higher class as alone, can I think, be useful'.⁷³⁷

A second report, published in May 1868, discussed lights and incense, as well as pronouncing against ritualistic excesses in a much more specific manner than the first report. It condemned unwarranted innovation and recommended legislation permitting parishioners to make formal application to their bishop against clergymen who sanctioned practices which ran counter to general usage. Although Wilberforce signed the report, he entered a caveat against this particular provision.⁷³⁸

Archbishop Tait was determined to press for legislation. Disraeli was prepared to support a bill, but he left office before one could be drawn up. Gladstone, his successor, as a liberal minded High Churchman did not share Tait's conviction. The Archbishop was forced to wait for his Public Worship Bill until Disraeli became prime minister again in 1874. Samuel Wilberforce died before the bill became law.

5.4 Ireland and the Irish Church

Meredith Townsend,⁷³⁹ a leading and astute political commentator, said of Gladstone in 1864: 'He, perhaps, alone among statesmen would have the art and the

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.217.

⁷³⁶ *First Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Rubrics, Orders, and Directions for Regulating the Course of Conduct of Public Worship &c. on Church Ritual* (HMSO, 1867).

⁷³⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, pp.217-8

⁷³⁸ *Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Rubrics...* (HMSO, 1868).

⁷³⁹ ODNB. Morris, A.J.A., 'Townsend, Meredith White (1831-1911)' (2008), pp.4. Editor and proprietor of *The Spectator*.

energy to try as a deliberate plan to effect the final conciliation of Ireland'.⁷⁴⁰ Most of Gladstone's long parliamentary career was intimately involved with Irish affairs.⁷⁴¹ His foreboding and vision about the future of Ireland were expressed early on in a letter to his wife on 12 October 1845: 'Ireland! Ireland! That cloud in the west, that coming storm, the minister of God's retribution upon cruel and inveterate and but half-atoned injustice! Ireland forces upon us these great social and great religious questions – God grant that we may have courage to look them in the face and to work through them'.⁷⁴²

Wilberforce did not share Gladstone's passion, but they both had an interest in matters pertaining to the Irish Church.

The Maynooth Grant

In January 1844, it was proposed in Peel's cabinet that the government grant made annually to the Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth in Ireland should be increased from £9,000 to £30,000 per year and become permanent. The aim was firstly to redress the contrast between the Established Church of Ireland with its rich endowments, ministering to a fraction of the population, and the Roman Catholic Church which subsisted on the offerings of the poor while ministering to the mass of the population.⁷⁴³ The second aim was to encourage the priests trained there to be supportive of the Government at a time when agitation for ending the Union with Britain was posing a serious threat to public order.

Gladstone, who had been President of the Board of Trade since May 1843, argued that the Maynooth grant ran counter to the principle that the state should not

⁷⁴⁰ M. Townsend, in *Spectator*, 29 October 1864.

⁷⁴¹ For further details see: Bell, P.M.H., *Disestablishment in England and Wales* (London, 1969); Boyce D.G., *Nineteenth Century Ireland: The Search for Stability* (Dublin, 1990); O'Day A., 'Gladstone and Irish Nationalism: Achievement and Reputation', in Bebbington, D. & Swift, R. eds., *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool, 2000).

⁷⁴² Tilney Bassett, A., *Gladstone to his Wife* (London, 1936), p.64.

⁷⁴³ Magnus, pp.67-70.

give money to any religious body except the Church of England, which he had expounded in *The State in its Relations with the Church* in 1838. Having, in the words of Roy Jenkins, ‘plagued his colleagues with his conscience’,⁷⁴⁴ Gladstone eventually resigned from the Government over the measure in February 1845. Yet Gladstone recognised that Peel’s policy was the wisest course and he voted for it in Parliament.

Matthew has described Gladstone’s resignation as a ‘pivotal and purgative experience’ and that ‘never again did he invest government or party with the high ethical status of *The State in its Relations with the Church*’.⁷⁴⁵ Gladstone had to reluctantly admit that the state was no longer a Christian institution (Chapter 3). Morley summed up Gladstone’s dilemma: ‘He did not condemn the policy in itself, but...it was in direct antagonism to the principle elaborately expounded by him only six years before, as the sacred rule and obligation between a Christian state and Christian churches’.⁷⁴⁶

Wilberforce reached the same conclusions as Gladstone, in a different form of words. Writing to Charles Anderson on 26 April 1845, he was ‘quite for the Maynooth grant, not as a thing that I like in itself, but as a necessary step in our position when Church and State are rather at the fag end of an old alliance than identifiable terms’.⁷⁴⁷ Writing to his brother Robert on 29 April 1845, Samuel Wilberforce was more forthright: ‘What think you of Maynooth? It seems to me quite unavoidable – but another step towards the dissolution of all established religion’.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Jenkins, p.69.

⁷⁴⁵ Matthew, p.69.

⁷⁴⁶ Morley, Vol.1, p.271.

⁷⁴⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.265.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.266.

The Path to Disestablishment of the Irish Church

The Irish Church was not truly representative of the people of Ireland. Eighty percent of the Irish population belonged, at least nominally, to the Roman Catholic Church; nine percent were Protestant Dissenters, mainly concentrated in Ulster; only eleven per cent were adherents to the Church of Ireland, which, since the Act of Union in 1800, was constitutionally part of the Church of England.⁷⁴⁹

The Whig government under Earl Grey aimed at reducing religious friction in Ireland by a package of reforms. In reality four archbishops and eighteen bishops were far too many for the small Protestant population. The Church Temporalities (Ireland) bill, which appeared in the House of Commons on 12 February 1833, abolished two archbishoprics and eight bishoprics. The revenues of the two wealthiest sees, Armagh and Derry, were reduced. The tax paid by parishioners to maintain a parish church in repair was abolished. Benefices were suspended from parishes where no worship had occurred for three years, tenants of bishops were allowed to convert their leases into perpetual tenancies, and income tax was imposed on livings worth over £300. In all, £150,000 was saved by these measures, the money being used to repair churches and to augment the stipends of poor clergy.⁷⁵⁰ This interference by the state into the affairs of the established church was the subject of John Keble's Assize Sermon on 14 July 1833 which was crucial to the foundation of the Oxford Movement (Chapter 3 above). Gladstone spoke in the House of Commons against the bill. He feared that the probable effect would be to 'place the Church of Ireland on an untenable foundation'.⁷⁵¹

J.L.Hammond considered that anyone listening to Gladstone in the Commons in the 1850s and early 1860s would have been surprised to be told that the reconciliation

⁷⁴⁹ Bebbington (1993), p.41.

⁷⁵⁰ Chadwick, Part 1, p.57.

⁷⁵¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5 July 1833, Vol.19, cc.293-4.

of England and Ireland would be the main task of the last twenty years of his life.⁷⁵²

In fact, there is considerable evidence that Gladstone was constantly giving much thought to Ireland. This is reflected in his diary and in correspondence with Samuel Wilberforce. Before standing in the parliamentary election for Oxford University in 1845, Gladstone told his constituents that the establishment of the Irish Church was in principle indefensible, but he committed neither the government nor himself to any action.⁷⁵³ In April 1845, Gladstone admitted: 'The Irish Church question is upon me like a nightmare'.⁷⁵⁴

In August 1845 Gladstone sent Wilberforce a list of questions on the status of the Irish Church for his consideration. These were mainly as to whether the established Church or Roman Catholicism was the genuine representative of the ancient Church of Ireland. Wilberforce replied: 'The one thing the Irish Church needs to do is to show that she is the Irish Church. Failing this, I fear that no validity of title will long uphold her: nor, indeed, do I think it ought to do so. Let her show this, and I should not fear for her'.⁷⁵⁵ Gladstone's reply was pessimistic:

As you say, title by descent will not uphold her, and efficiency would be her best argument. But...the Irish Church is not in the large sense efficient: the working results of the last ten years have disappointed me...The title in short is 'questioned', and vehemently; not only by the Radicalism of the day, but by the Roman Bishops, who claim to hold the succession of St. Patrick.⁷⁵⁶

Irish ecclesiastical issues were still on Gladstone's mind in May 1847, when he wrote in his diary: 'Saw B[isho]p of Oxford...on the questions related to RC endowment and Church Property in Ireland'.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵² Hammond, J.L., *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1964), 2nd ed., p.67.

⁷⁵³ Matthew, p.145.

⁷⁵⁴ *GD*, Vol.3, 25 April 1845.

⁷⁵⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.272.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.272-3.

⁷⁵⁷ *GD*, Vol.3, 18 May 1847.

In 1860 Palmerston's Whig government proposed the assimilation of the final Court of Appeal in Ireland into that of England, by adding the Irish archbishops who were Privy Councillors to the Judicial Committee. The Ecclesiastical Courts and Registries (Ireland) Bill was passed by the House of Lords but was withdrawn in the Commons, probably as a result of Gladstone's agitation in cabinet. In a letter to Gladstone on 27 June 1860, Wilberforce repeated his long standing conviction that 'the *only* course is to exclude *all* Bishops from the Judicial Committee, where their presence is strongly mischievous, giving a colour to decisions they can very little influence, and that in the wrong direction'.⁷⁵⁸ Two months later, in a letter to Gladstone on 20 August, he rejoiced that Gladstone 'was able to get rid of this wretched Bill'.⁷⁵⁹ Wilberforce noted in a diary entry for 18 March 1862 that Gladstone said he 'will not agree to plan for putting Irish Bishops on our Privy Council'.⁷⁶⁰ However, the newly appointed Archbishop of Dublin, Trench,⁷⁶¹ resurrected the whole issue of Irish representation on the Judicial Committee. Writing to Wilberforce on 3 June 1864, Gladstone wished:

That someone would in a friendly spirit warn the Primate of Ireland respecting the dangers he may bring to his tottering Establishment...by the policy he is pursuing, [with the] risk of it sinking the Church of England...in order to add infinitely to the strength of the Church of Ireland by the secular Bond he proposes to establish.⁷⁶²

The Irish Church Bill

In the General Election campaign in the autumn of 1868, Gladstone delivered a speech in Wigan which linked his various proposals for Irish legislation, likening the

⁷⁵⁸ Add. MS 44344, 27 June 1860.

⁷⁵⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, pp.456-7.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.47.

⁷⁶¹ *ODNB*. Milne, K., 'Trench, Richard Chenevix (1807-1886)' (2006), pp.6. Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin 1863-84. Friend of Samuel Wilberforce from mid 1830s, Wilberforce's curate at Alverstoke 1841-4 and in 1845 examining chaplain in diocese of Oxford. Subsequently Professor of Divinity at KCL and Dean of Westminster.

⁷⁶² Add. MS 44345, 3 June 1864.

Protestant ascendancy to the Upas tree, a fabulous Javanese tree which poisons all life in its vicinity:

There is the Church of Ireland, there is the land of Ireland, there is the education of Ireland, all of which depend on one greater than them all; they are all so many branches from one trunk, and that trunk...is called the Protestant ascendancy...which must not be allowed to exist.' It needed just 'one stroke more, the stroke of these elections' to bring it down.⁷⁶³

Colin Matthew considered that 'Gladstone seems to have believed that if the Irish were shown the Westminster Parliament redressing their grievances by spectacular acts of legislation, then this would encourage their adherence to the existing political structure'.⁷⁶⁴

However, Disraeli's gamble, that the electorate was not interested in Gladstone's manifesto which put Ireland at the centre of his election campaign, did not pay off. The Liberal party was swept into power with a large majority and Gladstone became Prime Minister in December 1868. On 16 March 1868 Gladstone declared for disestablishment of the Irish Church. This would be 'a great and formidable operation' but not beyond 'the courage and statesmanship of the British legislature'.⁷⁶⁵ followed by a Suspensory Bill on 22 May, which was carried in the Commons but rejected in the House of Lords, where Wilberforce spoke against it and also stressed the need for the Church of Ireland to maintain its endowments.⁷⁶⁶

Samuel Wilberforce reiterated his views in the *Quarterly Review*. He did not believe that the Irish Church could be separated from the State without endangering the union of the English Church and State as well: 'For if England and Ireland be one united kingdom, the destruction of the Church's nationality in one island must

⁷⁶³ *The Times*, 24 Oct. 1868, p.6.

⁷⁶⁴ Matthew, p.194.

⁷⁶⁵ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 16 March 1868, Vol.190, cc.1758-67.

⁷⁶⁶ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 29 June 1868, Vol.193, cc.170-75.

logically imply its destruction as national Church in both, although it may still survive as an anomaly in one'.⁷⁶⁷ Writing to Charles Anderson on 25 March 1868, Wilberforce was 'very sorry Gladstone has moved the attack on the Irish Church. It seems utterly unfit a subject for *this* parliament. I have no doubt that his hatred of the *low* tone of the Irish branch has a great deal to do with it'.⁷⁶⁸ Later, Wilberforce recorded in his diary a conversation he had had in March 1869 with the Queen at Windsor Castle: 'The Queen very affable. "So sorry Mr Gladstone started this about the Irish Church, and he is a great friend of yours"'.⁷⁶⁹

On 6 May, Wilberforce spoke at a large meeting in London in support of the union between Church and State. The meeting was attended by four archbishops, twenty one bishops and assorted peers of the realm. Wilberforce played upon popish fears by declaring that a disestablished church would mean the automatic establishment of Roman Catholicism.⁷⁷⁰ In the House of Lords he attempted to prove St Patrick was a crypto-Anglican and that the Roman Catholics were latter day intruders.⁷⁷¹ However, Wilberforce's whole approach to the issue of Irish disestablishment changed when the early returns from the election in November indicated a Liberal victory. He wrote to his old friend Trench, the Archbishop of Dublin, on 20 November:

In a few weeks [Gladstone] will be in office, at the head of a majority of something like a hundred elected on the distinct issue of Gladstone and the Irish Church...Even if Parliamentary tactics could purchase a delay, I see not the faintest reason to suppose they could win a reversal of the sentence, whilst

⁷⁶⁷ Wilberforce, S., 'Archbishops of the Reformation', *Quarterly Review* (1868), Vol.125, p.125

⁷⁶⁸ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.241.

⁷⁶⁹ Wilberforce, R. (1889), p.351.

⁷⁷⁰ *The Times*, 7 May 1868, p.7

⁷⁷¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 29 June 1868, Vol.193, cc.193-210.

that delay may...rob us of the opportunity of saving something by a timely surrender of what cannot anyhow be kept.⁷⁷²

Trench replied that while he regarded establishment as hopelessly and irrevocably gone, he urged delay in the hope that the tide would eventually turn and Gladstone would lose support for his proposals.⁷⁷³ Wilberforce responded to Trench on 30 December, fiercely denigrating Disraeli and emphasising that Gladstone was supported by 'a great and confident majority' and that 'the decision of the constituencies was 'incapable of misapprehension or reversal.' Nevertheless Wilberforce did 'not expect that Disestablishment will remove any Irish dissatisfaction. I believe it will be an injury to the Church and a far greater injury to the State'. The next stage should be to protect endowments and property in the settlement In addition:

You MUST claim :- (1) Entire freedom from state interference. (2) Your being constituted a corporation capable of self-government and holding property. (3) That the satisfaction-money for vested rights should be in a common fund under common management...It is with me a question whether (4) it should be made a condition that you are in full communion with the English Reformed Church. I should have great hopes...of a tolerably satisfactory result following *immediate* action on your parts in this direction...Delay and vexatious resistance will bring the question into a state in which no such results can be hoped for.⁷⁷⁴

Wilberforce invited Trench to make use of this letter in any way he liked. However, in late December 1868, Gladstone wrote to Sir Robert Phillimore, chancellor of the diocese of Oxford, to ascertain whether his bishop was willing to write a 'public or private' letter to Trench, unaware that Wilberforce had been already been in correspondence with Trench over the previous month. Phillimore put this proposition to Wilberforce on 24 December.⁷⁷⁵ Wilberforce replied on 31 December, enclosing a copy of the letter he had sent Trench just the previous day. In his covering

⁷⁷² Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol. 3, p.276.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.276-7.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, pp. 277-280.

⁷⁷⁵ BL, I. C200. 24 Dec.1868.

letter, Wilberforce told Phillimore that he could let Gladstone see it if he thought fit. 'But I doubt whether I ought to publish anything until the Irish prelates or the best of them are ready to take my council'.⁷⁷⁶ Phillimore had already warned Wilberforce of the obloquy that he might attract if he made public his sudden change of heart over Irish disestablishment. In his reply on 31 December Wilberforce reiterated that the election had settled the matter for him and that Gladstone was, in politics, his 'natural leader' and he would do all he could for him:

But I should lose all power of doing good in the matter if it were seen that I deserted [the Irish bishops] in their difficulty; and this hindrance is aggravated by the way in which Disraeli has avenged the sin of my known affection for Gladstone in those recent ecclesiastical appointments which are likely to outlast my life, and which will give so easy a handle for attributing my action to personal pique.⁷⁷⁷

On the 31 December, Lord Lyttelton, Gladstone's brother-in-law, and currently his host at Hagley Hall, wrote to Wilberforce with a form of genteel blackmail. He described the recent ecclesiastical appointments of Palmerston and Disraeli as 'a scandal to the Church and a reproach to the Ministers who made them'. The new parliament was determined on disestablishment and patronage, 'according to universal and ancient usage', would be employed to see it carried through. It was generally recognised that the expected demise of Bishop Sumner of Winchester 'may furnish the *only* opportunity, *for years*, of a recognition – and though not an adequate, not a *very inadequate*, recognition of your great claims'. Loss of this opportunity to advance Wilberforce 'would be to thousands of us a matter of unspeakable regret and annoyance'. While he did not know if there was sufficient hope for achieving this object after Wilberforce's speech against disestablishment in the last session,

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 Dec. 1868.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, See Chapter 2. Wilberforce had been passed over for the recently vacant Archbishopric of Canterbury and Bishopric of London, due to Disraeli.

Lyttelton was now writing 'in a materially altered state of things' and 'having heard of indications...that your own political view has been modified'. Lyttelton called upon Wilberforce to make his position known and to act upon it...*now*'. He suggested that Wilberforce 'might make some such communication...to the Irish Bishops and above all to Archbishop Trench'.⁷⁷⁸

Before replying to Lyttelton, Wilberforce wrote again to Trench, reiterating the advice he had given to him earlier and now asking him if he would favour a public letter as suggested by Phillimore and Lyttelton.⁷⁷⁹ Trench refused to negotiate with Gladstone because in his opinion this would yield no advantage and would alienate Irish Churchmen. A letter from Wilberforce would tell those Churchmen that they had lost an ally in Wilberforce, thus convincing them that they must fight harder. Because of his position in the Church, Wilberforce of all people 'must not be seen to desert them'.⁷⁸⁰ Wilberforce replied to Lyttelton on 18 January:

A letter received this morning from the Archbishop of Dublin determines me not, under present circumstances, to publish my letter. The Archbishop eagerly deprecates my doing so, as an act of the most injurious hostility, which would stir up widespread wrath, and require probably *his* answering me in a tone which will make all future negotiations more difficult.

Wilberforce had two other misgivings concerning publication: Would he subject his office and therefore the Church to odium if he came forward publicly to announce a change that many would believe 'tuned and timed to the interest of personal advancement?' Secondly, would a public declaration really work in Gladstone's favour, assuming Gladstone was anxious to reach a solution which was satisfactory except to the diehards on both sides?: 'It is one thing for *him* to know that he will have such support; another that the world should know it. When it might be

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 Dec.1868.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Jan. 1869.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 Jan.1869.

presumably useful to him to be able to point to a possible adverse House of Lords majority, to render with his own followers an unpalatable moderation possible'.⁷⁸¹

The public letter to Lord Lyttelton, entitled *The Answer to the Constituencies* summarised the views enunciated in the letters he had written to Trench in November and December 1868. The bottom line was that disestablishment was a *fait accompli* and further opposition would only endanger the Church's chance of obtaining an equitable endowment once disestablishment had been forced upon it.⁷⁸²

Lyttelton sent this public letter to Gladstone, who then wrote a strong and pointed letter to Wilberforce on 21 January 1869:

It will be pleasant for me to know that you individually have adopted and urge the opinions which you describe. But these opinions (forgive me if I speak plainly) are perfectly nugatory as regards any utility to the Church, unless and until they are denoted by some public action. Trench seems to be a dreamer of dreams: and talks of negotiating at a time when all negotiation will have gone by. I must look...to justify our measure in the eyes of those by whom it is supported; and who, if they keep together, are *amply sufficient* to carry it...Therefore the Bill must be framed with reference to those who support it, and not to those who oppose it. Now for every practical purpose all those who have opposed it are opponents still, until they signify, as emphatically as they spoke or acted before, that with the change of the scales their opinion as to the right mode of action has changed. Those of whom the world knows nothing, except that to the utmost of their power they opposed us last year, count with the world as opponents still, and the private changes in their opinions *cannot* weigh with us in the formation of the Bill.⁷⁸³

Wilberforce sent the public letter to the Bishop of Peterborough, Magee,⁷⁸⁴ who until recently had been Dean of Cork. Magee thoroughly concurred with all that was

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1869.

⁷⁸² BL. I. C200, *The Answer to the Constituencies*.

⁷⁸³ Add. MS 44345, 17 Jan. 1869.

⁷⁸⁴ ODNB. Macdonnell, J.C., 'Magee, William Connor (1821-1891)' (2006), pp.5. Dean of Cork 1864-8, Bishop of Peterborough 1868-91, Archbishop of York for 7 weeks before his death.

written, but was against publication: 'It would be a gun seized by the enemy and turned against the Irish Church with such deadly effect that they would surrender on any terms'.⁷⁸⁵ Wilberforce sent Magee's letter to Gladstone, who then advised against publication of *Answer of the Constituencies*: 'I do not agree with all he [Magee] says of the publication, but I think it too much to put upon you individually thus to step out in the front of the ranks and decide the matter by single combat'. He now hoped that an Irish convocation might be assembled to deal with the matter as a joint endeavour.⁷⁸⁶ Reginald Wilberforce's interpretation on why it was decided not to publish the letter was not from timidity but simply from the fear of a rupture of the longstanding friendship between his father and Trench.⁷⁸⁷ While this is a plausible and possible reason, it may also have been that Gladstone was satisfied that Wilberforce was now on side.

On 16 February Wilberforce updated Gladstone on the horse trading he was having with English and Irish bishops: 'Can you empower me to say, that if a large proportion of the English Bishops, and following them, Irish Churchmen of weight enough to tear out the heart of the opposition, ranged themselves as supporters under protest of your Irish policy they might secure the following terms'. These terms included the Irish Church becoming a separate body entirely free from State interference and capable of self government and the acquisition of property. The Irish Church should retain its churches and glebe houses, as well as its post Reformation endowments and private benefactions. Wilberforce concluded that he had been diligently working in this direction and saw 'the possibility of some success if you can so far enable me to speak'.⁷⁸⁸ As Bell has stated, these would have been generous

⁷⁸⁵ BL. I. C200. 28 Jan. 1869.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 Jan. 1869.

⁷⁸⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.283.

⁷⁸⁸ Add MS 44345, 16 Feb. 1869.

terms, especially the provision about post-Reformation endowments.⁷⁸⁹ Gladstone and Wilberforce held a four hour discussion that same day, which would probably have been on this same issue.⁷⁹⁰

Gladstone's confidence in Wilberforce was justified when he persuaded the English bishops to not oppose Irish disestablishment. Gladstone gave credit to Wilberforce when writing to J.T.Delane,⁷⁹¹ the editor of *The Times*, on 27 February, recommending some recognition in print:

The English bishops have behaved extremely well in Convocation under the guidance apparently of my Lords of Peterborough and Oxford. You gave them credit a few days ago – they have now finished the business and overcome the lower House, and they deserve another slice'.⁷⁹²

Gladstone wrote similarly to Earl Spencer, the Irish Lord Lieutenant, on the same day: 'You will I hope be pleased, as I have been, with the proceedings of the English Bishops, mainly guided by my Lords of Oxford and Peterborough in their convocation'.⁷⁹³

Gladstone introduced the bill in the Commons on 1 March. He was relieved that it was well received by the House.⁷⁹⁴ Writing to Earl Spencer he was pleased that the Bill got in 'without awakening the jealousy or suspicion either of Presbyterians, dissenters or Roman Catholics,' which would have allowed amendments to be considered in detail. Gladstone was pleased to report the bill was favourably received by various Church people: '...those whom I have heard of are Mrs Tait, Lyttelton and the Bishop of Oxford – not a bad typical selection'.⁷⁹⁵ After passing through the

⁷⁸⁹ Bell, P.M.H, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales* (London, 1969), p. 125.

⁷⁹⁰ *GD*, Vol.7, 16 Feb.1869.

⁷⁹¹ ODNB. Hamilton,G., 'Delane, John Thadeus (1817-1879)' (2008), pp.6. Editor of *The Times* 1841-77. In his lifetime regarded as the unquestioned head of the journalistic profession.

⁷⁹² Add. MS 44419, 27 Feb.1869.

⁷⁹³ Add. MS 44536, 27 Feb.1869.

⁷⁹⁴ *GD*, Vol.7, p.33. 1 March 1869.

⁷⁹⁵ Add. MS 44306, 3 March 1869.

third reading in the Commons, the bill was debated in the House of Lords during July 1869.

Wilberforce neither spoke nor voted on the bill during the debate. He had been prodded by Gladstone before the debate:

When I was a youth sitting just behind Sir R. Peel there was a famous old Whig landlady at the inn in Fushie Bridge on the road to Edinburgh who had known me from a child and who...used to say to me 'Now, mind I always see your face in the Divisions'. That is what I earnestly say to you, by no means thinking of the mere unit in reckoning the numbers...As to the vote on the second reading and what it must mean there is no doubt...acceptance not approval is the thing meant: and that with the limitations I describe.⁷⁹⁶

Wilberforce warned a meeting of English and Irish bishops on 6 May: 'The Bishops in the House of Lords are statesmen and must act so. We are bound to use the power we have; not what we have not. We should deeply injure the Irish Church if we threw the bill out, and the House of Lords as well'.⁷⁹⁷

Wilberforce only spoke when the bill had gone into Committee after the second reading. He explained that the accidents of debate had prevented him from so far stating his views and 'from giving the vote I should otherwise have given...The question of disestablishment was now a settled question'. However, Wilberforce believed 'that the disestablishment of the Irish Church would not appease Irish discontent, but, instead of doing so, will give to Irish opposition to the union with Great Britain the increased violence which comes from a taste of success without the satisfaction of the appetite'. He cautioned against prolonging the struggle against the bill as 'political and party struggle tends by degrees to eat out the heart of Christian life'. He reiterated the need for the Irish Church to retain endowments and urged the Committee to agree to the amendment which 'may leave our Irish brethren with

⁷⁹⁶ BL, I. C200, 12 June 1869.

⁷⁹⁷ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.288.

larger resources of their own and with less of antagonism and hatred from the other side'. Wilberforce reiterated what he had told Trench - 'no Church which cannot stand without an Establishment is worth being established'.⁷⁹⁸ The only times Wilberforce voted with the government was against postponement of the money settlement, which he considered bad for the disestablished Church, and against refusing to consider and amend the Commons amendments on the Lords' amendments.⁷⁹⁹

With the support of English Nonconformists and Irish Catholics in the Commons, and with the Conservatives in the Lords being persuaded to a compromise on the issue, the bill became an Act of Parliament.⁸⁰⁰ The Church of Ireland would be disestablished and disendowed from 1 January 1871. All other public endowments of religion in Ireland, whether to Presbyterians (the *Regium Donum*) or to Catholics (the Maynooth grant) would cease. The bishops and representative clergy and laity would constitute a self-governing body for the new Church of Ireland. The proceeds of disendowment, once existing interests and obligations were discharged, would be devoted to a fund for beneficial measures of relief not eligible under the existing Poor Law. Shannon summarised this as 'heroic government engaging in a set-piece frontal assault on a deeply entrenched historic vested interest'.⁸⁰¹ The 'hands-on' efforts by Gladstone at every stage of the Bill achieved its passage through the Commons. Roy Jenkins likened Wilberforce's role to 'a scout scurrying between the lines and incurring both the limited gratitude and the dangers of such a role'.⁸⁰²

⁷⁹⁸ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 29 June 1869, Vol.197, cc.713-20.

⁷⁹⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.3, p.292.

⁸⁰⁰ Bebbington (1993), pp148-9.

⁸⁰¹ Shannon, Vol.2, p.66.

⁸⁰² Jenkins, p.298.

5.5 Social Issues and Legislation

It was inevitable that Wilberforce and Gladstone had an input into contemporary social and moral issues in which the Church had an interest. Limitation in the length of the thesis precludes a comprehensive review of this subject. However, two issues worthy of particular scrutiny are elementary education provision and the question of divorce.

Elementary Education

Wilberforce and Gladstone shared a passionate interest in the extension of elementary education provisions to the working class. Prior to 1870, this primarily depended on voluntary efforts, in which religious bodies, both Anglican and Nonconformist, played a key role.⁸⁰³ The National Society was founded in 1811 with the object of providing education according to the principles of the Church of England. Many Churchmen believed it was the right and the duty of the Church to educate the children of England,⁸⁰⁴ while some Radicals wished to impose a universal system of state education on the country. Wilberforce and Gladstone supported the work of the National Society. Writing to Charles Anderson on 7 December 1838, while rector of Brighstone, Wilberforce stated that he was:

now very busy ordering a Diocesan Board for National Education after the notions of Acland, Wood, Gladstone, and all that party of young men who have been moving the subject in London...It is, I believe, a vital question for the Church. If the education of the country is to be taken from us, and they are to be stuffed with a smattering of science, and what not, instead of being taught their duty to God and to their neighbour in a plain old catechetical way, there can be but one end of it, and that must be the ruin of our land.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰³ For further details see especially Sutherland, G., *Elementary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1971); Midwinter, E.C., *Nineteenth Century Education* (London, 1970).

⁸⁰⁴ Pereiro, J., 'Tractarians and National Education, 1838-1843' in Gilley, S. (ed.), *Victorian Churches and Churchmen: essays presented to Vincent Alan McClelland* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp.249-78.

⁸⁰⁵ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.1, p.130

The National Society tried to provide primary education in as many parishes as required it.⁸⁰⁶ The bishops had created diocesan and subdiocesan education boards to coordinate and encourage the development of improved voluntary schools. The teaching of religion in schools was regarded as the responsibility of the clergy at grass roots level, although teacher training colleges were slowly being set up. However, the requirements of the population, especially in cities, far exceeded the capabilities of existing voluntary societies. In 1839 Lord John Russell proposed extending the annual education grant (introduced in 1833) to all reputable schools, even those outside the two principal societies. The government now insisted that a scheme of school inspection be put into place. This and the administration of the government grant was placed under the direction of a special Education Committee of the Privy Council. James Kay-Shuttleworth⁸⁰⁷ was appointed as the committee's assistant secretary, effectively becoming its senior bureaucrat and administrator of the state grant. Religious instruction was to be limited to Biblical generalities rather than catechetical indoctrination. The bishops took a firm stance against this, but were outmanoeuvred from the outset. By law the government only needed the consent of the Commons to spend less than a million pounds. This measure was passed by the Commons, but would not have survived the Episcopal wrath in the Lords.⁸⁰⁸

Samuel Wilberforce preached in 1838 of the integral part that religion played in education. He added that the Church of England schools were then in need of greater

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.105.

⁸⁰⁷ *ODNB*. Selleck, R.J.W., 'Shuttleworth, Sir James Philips Kay-, first baronet (1804-1877)' (2004), pp.9. Civil servant and educationalist. Although brought up as a devout Congregationalist, he asserted the State's right, as against the churches, in the provision of education. His ideas were attacked by the established Church and sometimes by Dissenters and Roman Catholics. He forced through regulations and a system of inspection which affected how and what children were taught, the design of school buildings, structure of the teaching profession, and the ways schools were governed.

⁸⁰⁸ Soloway, R.A., *Prelates and People* (London & Toronto, 1969), p.400.

assistance than ever: infidelity was trying to supersede religion.⁸⁰⁹ Two years later, in an open letter to Lord Brougham, a previous Lord Chancellor, Wilberforce claimed that the Government was attempting to take control of schools by stealth: he who managed inspection managed the school. He also disputed Kay's claim that the education provided by Church schools was inadequate. Wilberforce pointed out that the shortfall in educational provision was mainly in the great towns and manufacturing centres, where the Church was weak and Dissent was strong and economically powerful. Why were there not more schools promoted by the Dissenters in the towns? As the Church system was already *in situ*, was it not reasonable to reinforce rather than set aside this functioning and already rapidly expanding machinery?⁸¹⁰

Gladstone, writing on 24 March 1843 to Lord Lyttelton,⁸¹¹ wished to maintain freedom of parental choice in the teaching of religion in schools. Gladstone disagreed with limiting religious education solely to the reading of Scriptures. However, he argued that if Dissenting parents chose either to confine their children's religious education to the reading of Scripture and not the exposition of Christian religion, or to neither, then that should be their legal right. While the Church [of England] 'had to be kept inviolate, our business with respect to the State is to bolster up its practice as well as we can'.⁸¹² After 1846, National Society schools who wished to receive government grants had to admit lay managers into the government of the school and

⁸⁰⁹ Wilberforce, S., *The Power of God's Word needful for National Education. A Sermon preached at St John's Chapel, Portsea, 28 October 1838* (London, 1838).

⁸¹⁰ Wilberforce, S., *A letter to the Right Hon. Henry, Lord Brougham, on the Government Plan of Education* 3rd edn. (London, 1840), pp.32-6.

⁸¹¹ ODNB. Gordon, P. 'Lyttelton, George William, 4th Baron Lyttelton and 4th Baron Westcote (1817-1876)' (2006), pp.5. Educationist. Married W.E.Gladstone's sister. Briefly Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1846. Took a lifelong interest in education. Gladstone in 1868 appointed him head of endowed schools.

⁸¹² Lathbury, Vol.2, p.131.

to accept a 'conscience clause', whereby a Dissenter could withdraw his child from religious instruction.

By 1870, two-thirds of the money spent annually on national schools came from voluntary contributions and pupils' parents, the remaining third being derived from government grants.⁸¹³ On top of this were all the capital assets from non-government sources accrued over previous years. By 1861 the Church of England was educating 76.2% of the children being taught in day schools and 45.8% of children in the Sunday schools of England. The Church had produced between nine and ten elevenths of the day schools in the country.⁸¹⁴ However, education rarely reached the poorest members of the community. Even where the schools were available, Wilberforce questioned whether the education provided made much impression on either the intellectual or spiritual character of the labouring classes.⁸¹⁵

W.E.Forster,⁸¹⁶ vice-president of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, shepherded the passage of the Endowed Schools Act through Parliament. Forster also master minded the Education Act of 1870 which reformed elementary education. His aim was to provide a school for every child between the ages of six and twelve. Forster was not prepared to abolish the denominational schools, but intended to fill in the gaps with nondenominational schools subsidized by the rates. The National Education League, led by a Birmingham Radical Nonconformist clique, including Joseph Chamberlain, wanted the complete elimination of church schools. It wanted free, national and secular education.⁸¹⁷ In its initial form, Forster's act had

⁸¹³ Report of the Standing Committee on Education, *Parliamentary Papers* (1876), Vol. 59, pp. 108-9.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (1861), Vol. 21, Pt. 1, pp.55 and 80.

⁸¹⁵ Wilberforce, S., *A Charge to the Diocese of Oxford on his Third Visitation* (1854), pp. 45-6.

⁸¹⁶ *ODNB*. Warren, A., 'Forster, William Edward (1818-1886)' (2008), pp.14. Politician. Liberal M.P. for Bradford from 1861. Became vice- president of British and Foreign Bible Society. Privy Councillor in 1868, joined the cabinet in July 1870. Radical in opposition 1875-80, Chief Secretary for Ireland 1880-2.

⁸¹⁷ Adelman, P., 'Gladstone and Education', *History Today*, Vol.20 (1970), pp.496-503.

permitted local authorities to make grants to denominational schools. Forster was forced to drop this provision during the bill's passage through Parliament. This left the denominational schools, which were of necessity partly supported by public subscription, in unequal competition with the board schools which were wholly supported by public funds or the rates. Eventually the cabinet agreed that church schools would be funded directly by the Treasury.⁸¹⁸

In April 1870 Wilberforce urged Gladstone to use his 'absolute power to carry through your own bill as you brought it in'.⁸¹⁹

On 14 June 1870 the cabinet accepted a compromise amendment by Forster's successor, W. F. Cowper-Temple,⁸²⁰ that rate-built schools were to be excluded from all denominational formularies, thus providing, somewhat uncertainly with no other official guidance being given, for nondenominational religious instruction.

Gladstone, writing to Earl de Grey⁸²¹ on 4 November 1869, considered that either the State or the local community should provide the secular teaching, and 'either leave the option to the ratepayers to go beyond this *sine qua non* if they think fit, within the limits of the Conscience Clause, or else simply leave the parties themselves to find Bible or other religious education from voluntary sources'.⁸²² Gladstone summed up his current views during the passage of the Education Bill through Parliament in a letter to Earl Russell: 'We should leave religion free, and not

⁸¹⁸ Kitson Clark, pp.136-7.

⁸¹⁹ Add. MS 44345, 14 April 1870.

⁸²⁰ ODNB. Pollard, A.F., 'Temple, William Francis Cowper-, Baron Mount-Temple (1811-1888)' (2008), pp.4. Politician. Whig MP 1835-68. Held junior government posts 1841-55. President of Board of Health 1855-58. Vice president of Committee of Council on Education 1857, Commissioner of Works 1860-6.

⁸²¹ ODNB. Denholm, A.F., 'Robinson, George Frederick Samuel, first Marquess of Ripon (1827-1909)' (2008), pp.14. Viscount Goderich from 1853 to 1859. Succeeded in 1859 to earldom of Ripon and from his uncle, title of Earl de Grey. Elevated to a marquessate in 1871. Radical MP. Secretary of State for War, 1863-6, Liberal Lord President in Gladstone's 1868 cabinet. Became Roman Catholic in 1874. Appointed Viceroy of India by Gladstone 1880-5, Colonial Secretary 1892-5. Lord Privy Seal 1905-8.

⁸²² Lathbury, Vol.2, p.138.

discountenanced or disparaged, protect conscience effectually, and keep the State out of all responsibility for, or concern in, religious differences'.⁸²³

Writing to Gladstone on 7 August 1860, Wilberforce considered that conscience clauses were wrong. Any attempt to restrain school managers' liberty of 'discretionally acting in the spirit of the conscience clause [was] monstrous'.⁸²⁴ Replying on 11 August, Gladstone expressed the view that there was much to be said for conscience clauses, and he did not see that they were incompatible with the due freedom of managers and unity of the system. He agreed with Wilberforce that having representatives of different religions on governing bodies would be 'destructive'.⁸²⁵

Gladstone finally gave his opinion on the Cowper-Temple clause in a letter to Lord Lyttelton on 25 October 1870. It was in no sense his own choice or that of the government: 'Our first proposition was best. But it received no active support, even from the Church, the National Society, or the Opposition...The very utmost that could be done was to arrange the matter as it now stands, where the exclusion is limited to the formulary, and to get rid of the popular imposture of undenominational instruction'.⁸²⁶

By the religious compromise of 1870 England was enabled to obtain a system of universal primary education without which she would have fallen behind other modern nations.⁸²⁷ Following the Cowper-Temple clause, Wilberforce told Gladstone that he saw 'the anger of schools on the modified Christian instruction principle to be exceedingly great'.⁸²⁸ The compromise on religious education in the 1870 Act was

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.139.

⁸²⁴ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.458.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.459.

⁸²⁶ Lathbury, Vol.2, pp.141-2.

⁸²⁷ Trevelyan, G.M., *English Social History* (London, 1944), p.581.

⁸²⁸ Add. MS 44345, 17 April 1870.

considered by Matthew to be ‘a personal concession which rankled more deeply than any of the many concessions Gladstone made to hold his ministry together’.⁸²⁹

The Question of Divorce

From the late seventeenth century Parliament ordained that a man could obtain a divorce, but the proceedings were cumbersome and costly. The first stage was a decree from a church court of separation *a mensa et thoro* (from bed and board). The next stage was a civil action of ‘criminal conversation’ against the co-respondent, and finally the passage of a bill of divorce through both Houses of Parliament. The latter nearly always contained a special clause permitting re-marriage. This process was only available to the wealthy.⁸³⁰ There was the anomaly that many people did not belong to the National Church, or indeed to any church. There was therefore a need for a secular divorce court and a system which would be available to all.

The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Bill, promoted by Palmerston’s government, passed through both Houses in 1857, but not without vehement opposition from both Wilberforce and Gladstone.

Wilberforce considered that it was contrary to the law of God to allow divorced persons to remarry. He also submitted an amendment that the guilty parties should be fined or imprisoned.⁸³¹ Both amendments were rejected. Striking a note of patronising unction, Wilberforce considered that the proposed law ‘was a threat to the sanctity of married life among the poorer and less instructed part of the community’. He thought that the present state of things, i.e. divorce by Act of Parliament, was far safer than that which it was proposed to introduce. He ‘feared there would be an opening of the floodgates of licence upon the hitherto purity of English life.’ Moreover, ‘The lower

⁸²⁹ Matthew, p.205.

⁸³⁰ Lentin, A., ‘Anglicanism, Parliament and the Courts’, in Parsons, G., ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain, II, Controversies*, pp.92-3.

⁸³¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 3 July 1856, Vol.143, cc.231-5.

classes, who gave no indication for relaxation of the law, knew legal divorce was an impossibility'.⁸³²

Gladstone resisted the Bill tenaciously in the Commons, making seventy-three interventions, fighting clause by clause, between 24 July and 17 August 1857.⁸³³ He attempted to filibuster the Bill, recommending continuation of the debate into the next session of Parliament.⁸³⁴ In the words of Morley, Gladstone 'fought the bill with a holy wrath'.⁸³⁵ One of his major complaints was the inequality in the bill between the respective rights of husband and wife, given 'the indestructible basis of the equality of the sexes under Christian law'.⁸³⁶ Wilberforce suggested that a wife should be able to keep her own property after desertion.⁸³⁷

Gladstone and Wilberforce both tried to prevent the remarriage of divorcees with their co-respondents and to make it compulsory that divorced persons must remarry in a registry office.⁸³⁸ The Act stated that a clergyman was exempted from all penalty if he refused to marry the guilty party in his church. What incensed Wilberforce and Gladstone was that such a clergyman must surrender his church if the couple could find a clergyman of the same diocese to celebrate the wedding. Wilberforce vowed that if he knew one of these hired interlopers was attempting to enter a church in his diocese, he would meet him at the door with an inhibition and suspend him from his office. He did so on one occasion when Bishop of Winchester.⁸³⁹

Considering the conspicuous role which Gladstone had played in assisting the divorce of his friend Lord Lincoln (later Duke of Newcastle), Richard Shannon has

⁸³² *Hansard*, HL Deb, 26 June 1856, Vol.142, cc.97-83.

⁸³³ Shannon, Vol.1, p.343.

⁸³⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 24 July 1857, Vol.147, cc.436.

⁸³⁵ Morley, Vol.1, p.569.

⁸³⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 24 July 1857, Vol.157, cc.384-95.

⁸³⁷ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 26 June 1856, Vol.142, cc.1979-83.

⁸³⁸ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 3 July 1856, Vol.143, c.251.

⁸³⁹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.347.

suggested that Gladstone's approach to the bill in the Commons was 'unwise and unbalanced'.⁸⁴⁰ Wilberforce, in a letter on 20 June 1857, passed on to Gladstone warnings from the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Aberdeen, 'as a sacred debt of friendship,' that anything but a carefully moderated course on the bill on his part 'will come in too strong contrast with your past silence not to act unfavourably on the public mind'.⁸⁴¹

The main thrust of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act was to set up a Divorce Court, and gave it power to grant divorce (with liberty to remarry) to a husband on grounds of adultery, and to a wife on the grounds of adultery with certain aggravating circumstances.

5.6 Summary

Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone frequently worked in tandem and agreed on many parliamentary issues concerning the Church and the relationship between Church and State. Both strongly opposed a bill tabled in 1867 which aimed to curb Ritualism. When the 1868 election gave Gladstone a mandate for disestablishment of the Irish Church, Wilberforce ceased to oppose this issue, urging the hierarchy of the Irish Church to seek advantages to itself and persuading the English bishops not to oppose Irish disestablishment. Wilberforce and Gladstone took an interest in elementary education, in which eventually sharp compromises had to be made regarding religious education. Both vigorously resisted, but unsuccessfully, the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Bill of 1857.

⁸⁴⁰ Shannon, Vol.1, p.344.

⁸⁴¹ Ashwell & Wilberforce, Vol.2, p.345.

CONCLUSION

Samuel Wilberforce and William Ewart Gladstone came from strongly Evangelical families. Although both became High Churchmen, sharing the same beliefs on Church principles and practice which became an integral part of their personal relationship, they retained some basic tenets of Evangelicalism. Their fathers were both Members of Parliament, but from different ends of the Tory spectrum. The two men, one a rector and the other already a Member of Parliament, met in 1835, possibly earlier. Ecclesiastical issues and a mutual interest in education first brought them together.

As early as 1838 Samuel Wilberforce wrote presciently to Gladstone, who was then a Member of Parliament but not yet in the Government, predicting that Gladstone would become Prime Minister, as well as moral leader of the country and upholder of the Church of England. For his part, Gladstone greatly admired Wilberforce's sermons and oratory.

A friendship subsequently developed between Samuel Wilberforce and Gladstone from the early 1840s, when both were attaining national prominence. Wilberforce, as Bishop of Oxford from 1845, was an outstandingly effective and hard working prelate, whose diocesan work was held in high regard by Gladstone. Gladstone first became a government minister in 1841. The two men frequently met and clearly enjoyed each other's company, as reflected in their diary entries. They discussed and corresponded on a wide range of ecclesiastical and political topics, giving forthright opinions on each other and on their colleagues. Wilberforce was a frequent visitor to the Gladstone home at Hawarden, where they enjoyed long walks and discussions together. Gladstone stayed with Wilberforce at Cuddesdon, the bishop's palace, and at Lavington, Wilberforce's estate in Sussex. As the friendship matured in the 1840s

and 50s, they shared grief at the death of family members and mutual friends. They gave each other sympathy and support at times of personal difficulties, professional setbacks and disappointments. Only in 1869, when he was Prime Minister, was Gladstone able to translate Wilberforce from Oxford to the more prestigious Bishopric of Winchester. They often met at the homes of the aristocracy and the famous. It was on his way to such a house, in 1873, that Samuel Wilberforce met his death. Gladstone was already there, and the depth of his grief and anguish when he heard of Wilberforce's death reflected his sense of personal loss. Gladstone's eulogies at that time, as well as other public manifestations of his admiration which he expressed during the lifetime of Samuel Wilberforce, show the high regard in which he held Wilberforce and the warmth of their friendship.

The Church of England was threatened during the early Victorian period by external forces and internal divisions. Conflicts and disputes within the Church resulted from doctrinal differences. These included the rift between the High Church and Evangelicalism, the rise of Tractarianism and later Ritualism, as well as the challenges posed by the Broad Church in questioning the authenticity of the Bible. Specific contentious issues included the dispute between Maurice and King's College London, the Colenso case and the controversy concerning Pusey. There was also the challenge of Evolution to Christian belief following the advent of Darwinism by 1860. Both Wilberforce and Gladstone were drawn into the turbulence which embroiled the Church of England. Their opinions were generally in agreement and they often worked in tandem, although there were sometimes differences in emphasis.

The Gorham Judgement of 1850 was a catalyst in the defection to Roman Catholicism of friends of Gladstone and relatives of Wilberforce, many of whom were Tractarians. Wilberforce's brother-in-law, Henry Manning, was a close friend of

Gladstone who sorely felt his defection in 1851. It was probably from this time that Wilberforce became Gladstone's closest confidant in spiritual matters. Both strove together in vain to persuade Wilberforce's brother, Robert, a very distinguished theologian, from converting to Rome.

The Religious Census of 1851 showed that Dissenters were almost as large an element of the churchgoing public as were Anglicans. Gladstone, while remaining fully committed to the High Church cause, became a political figurehead for Dissenters, and was sometimes at odds with the more conservative Wilberforce over issues concerning Dissenters. Papal Aggression, with the establishment of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in England from 1850, was another threat to the Church of England.

The threats from Erastianism, the doctrine that the State is superior to the Church in ecclesiastical matters, and Rome, stimulated in 1852 the reestablishment of Convocation, the previously disbanded Church parliament. By 1861, Convocation had become an important source of Church opinion and was changing canons. Samuel Wilberforce was the driving force behind the re-establishment of Convocation, with the wholehearted support and encouragement of Gladstone.

Wilberforce and Gladstone frequently colluded and agreed on many parliamentary issues, although there were some areas of disagreement. Both actively supported an increase in the number of colonial bishops and their right to independent action, although legislation was thwarted by Evangelicals in Parliament. They supported the right of the Canadian Parliament to dispose of land owned by the Canadian Church. Both promoted an Act of 1865 whereby oaths of allegiance and supremacy were altered to allow some legitimate freedom in interpretation. A bill

tabled in 1867 with the aim of curbing Ritualism was strongly opposed by Wilberforce and Gladstone, who both saw it as a constraint on religious freedom.

Both saw the Church of Ireland as a weak vessel which was not truly representative of the Irish people. Gladstone had resigned from Peel's government in 1845 because of the Maynooth Grant, on the principle that the State should not give financial support to any religious body except the established Church. Wilberforce saw the grant as a necessary evil. Gladstone won the 1868 election in part on the issue of disestablishment of the Irish Church. Wilberforce then ceased to oppose Irish disestablishment because it was clearly the will of the electorate. His great achievement, fully acknowledged by Gladstone, was to persuade the hierarchy of the Irish Church and the English bishops to accept disestablishment as a *fait accompli*, while urging the Church of Ireland to seek maximum advantages to itself following disestablishment.

Social issues which had a religious context, and in which both Wilberforce and Gladstone had an interest, included education and divorce. Both had actively supported from the 1830s the National Society which provided education according to the principles of the Church of England. Both supported the extension of religious education in the Forster Act of 1870. Political pressure from radicals resulted in the insertion of conscience clauses, whereby parents could withdraw their children from religious teaching in Church schools, while national rate-built schools were excluded from all denominational formularies. Gladstone's acceptance of conscience clauses was political pragmatism mingled with disappointment. Wilberforce strongly disapproved of the loss of religious instruction on Anglican principles in many schools. Although both fought vigorously in parliament over the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Bill of 1857, their opposition was unsuccessful.

On the evidence given in this thesis, can it be concluded that the relationship between Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone was a true friendship? The answer to this first question is certainly in the affirmative. Does it equate with Aristotle's criteria for friendship, as described in the Introduction? Aristotle's precise criteria were mutual utility, pleasure in one another's company and respect for the other's virtues. There is clear evidence in the thesis that all of these criteria were matched in the relationship of Samuel Wilberforce and William Gladstone, from its early stages and throughout its duration despite some disagreements along the way. According to Aristotle, true *philia* emerged with the passage of time, during which friends mature and work together, sharing difficulties and successes. The long public and private relationship between the two men encapsulate all these aspects of *philia*.

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